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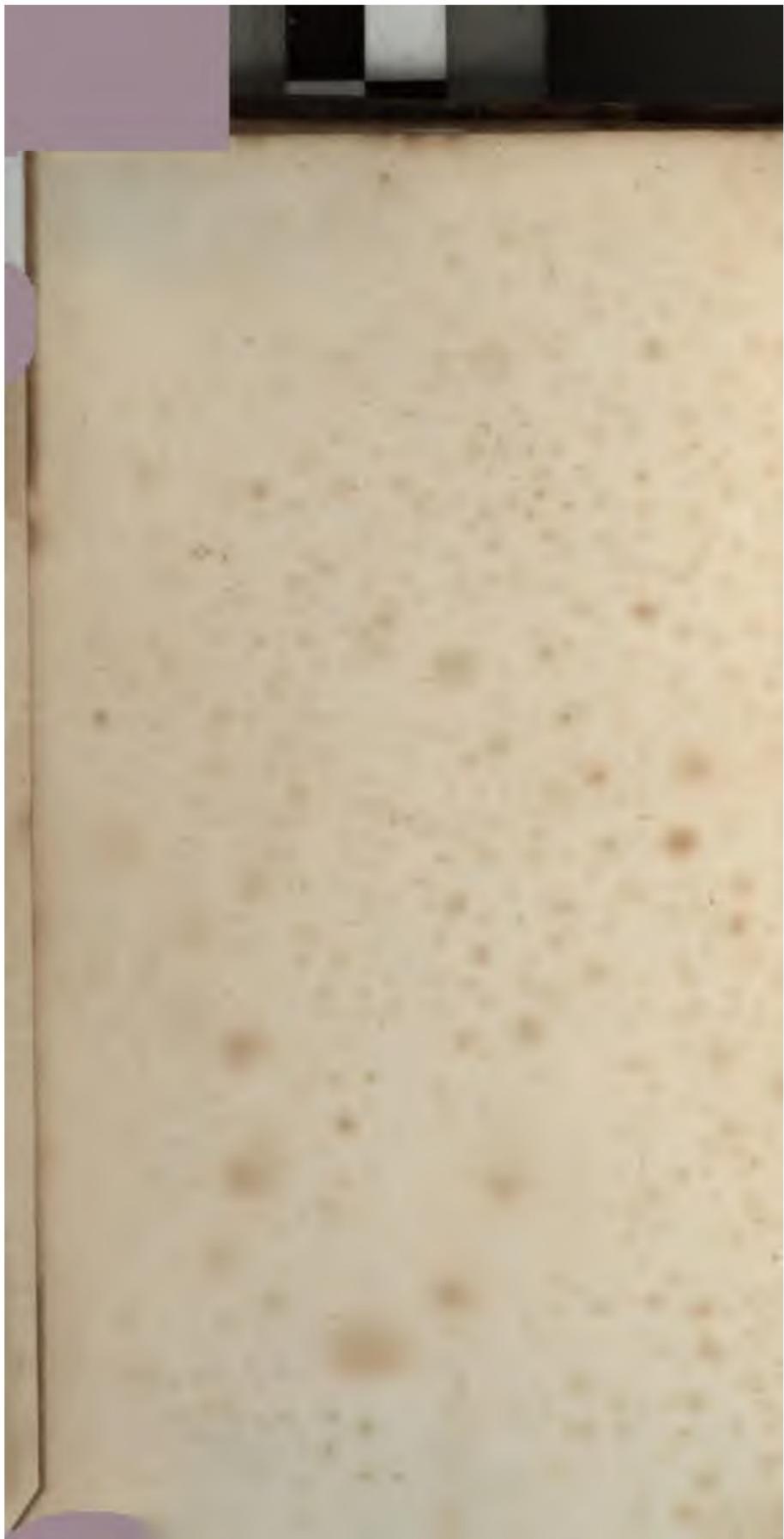
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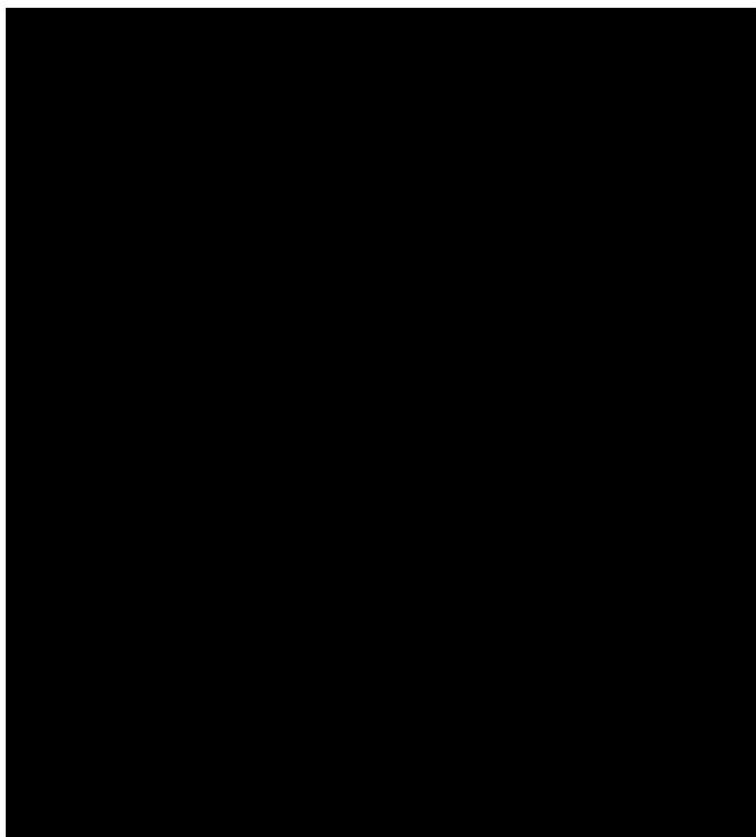
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GALE MIDDLETON.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"BRAMBLETYE HOUSE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

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1833.

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LONDON :

PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

[REDACTED]

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GALE MIDDLETON.

CHAPTER I.

Why should they not continue to value themselves for this outside fashionableness of the taylor's or tire-woman's making, when their parents have so early instructed them to do so?

LOCKE.

IT was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the chariot of Lady Barbara Rusport swept rapidly, and yet almost noiselessly, along the macadamised pavement of Portland Place, and drew up at a handsome house towards its northern extremity. The footman plied the knocker with an air and vigour that seemed to express a mingled sense of his own importance and that of his titled mistress; but, even in the best regulated mansions of the rich and noble, the delay in getting the street-door opened ge-

nerally increases with the number of the domestics, who must all be collected and distributed in their respective places before admission can be given to a visitant. Though there were but three men-servants in the house of Sir Matthew Middleton, in Portland Place, they were by no means well drilled ; nor, had they been three times as numerous, could the menial duties of the establishment have been worse discharged. Monsieur Dupin, the French butler, whom Lady Middleton, half in joke and half in hope that the title might be seriously recognised by her friends, termed her *maître d'hôtel*, had the faculty of being generally in the way when he was not wanted, and as often out of the way when his presence was required. As he was in the latter predicament at the moment in question, his fellow-servants were still running about the premises seeking him and calling out his name, when the knocker again sent its echoes through Portland Place, and Lady Barbara, peering through her eye-glass, first at the door and then at the drawing-room windows, murmured in a peevish, drawling voice,

"It is well that I never hurry myself about any thing. She *must* be at home, for I wrote her word that I should call, and she would hardly presume to disappoint me. It is well also that I have a companion who can beguile the time quite as well as Lady Middleton." So saying she leaned back in the carriage, and began playing with an Italian greyhound seated by her side, in which occupation she had remained two or three minutes, when Dupin, having been found, took his station on the landing-place; one of the livery servants stood at the foot of the stairs, the second opened the door, and the visitant was at length ushered into a spacious and handsome drawing-room, from the extremity of which the mistress of the mansion came running up to her, exclaiming:

"*Ah, ma chere* Lady Barbara! *charmée de vous voir.* I am delighted to see you! this is so *very* good of you; and I am the more vexed that my stupid people should keep you so long at the door. Pray accept my apologies."

"There is not the smallest occasion for offering them ; and since you have requested, nay intreated, that I would apprise you whenever you deviated from any of the customary usages of high life and the select circles, I must remind you that to make a formal apology, especially to a friend, is almost as much out of vogue, as to present compliments in writing a note to introduce your visitants to one another, or to say grace before and after dinner. Trifling as they may seem, it is only by such minutiae that, in these levelling times, any distinctions can be preserved. Permit me also to guard you against interlarding your ordinary discourse with scraps of French, even if they be grammatical and idiomatic, as yours always are."

"You surprise me, Lady Barbara. I thought I could not be wrong in adopting what seems to be an invariable custom of high life, if I may believe the authority of certain fashionable novels."

"Ah, my credulous friend ! is it possible that you can have been duped by those vulgar

GALE MIDDLETON.

lampooners, who would fain persuade you that we never open our lips without imitating the prioress, of whom Chaucer records that

‘ French she spake full fayre and fetisly,
After the schole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frenche of Paris was to hir unknowe.’

This is a mistake not the less absurd for its being so common.”

“ It is one, fortunately, which I can easily rectify.”

“ Then you must carefully eschew any thing like earnestness or cordiality. Against enthusiasm of whatever description I need not caution you, for your natural strong sense and quickness of tact would preserve you from committing such a solecism in good manners. An air of listless indifference to all persons and all things must establish your superiority to the cares and concerns of the vulgar world.”

“ But to you, my dear Lady Rusport, I could never affect this coldness.”

“ Pardon me ; it is indispensable ; the more you really feel, the more scrupulously should you assume an absolute indifference. You

never see *me* betray the least pleasure at meeting *you*." Lady Barbara, who sometimes indemnified herself by a masqued battery of sneer or sarcasm for the lessons which she gave, or rather sold, to her rich *protégée*, could not avoid an ironical smile as she spoke ; but, observing the blank expression of her friend's countenance, she added : "I need not tell you that in exercising this restraint I achieve a great triumph of fashion over feeling."

" You make me very happy in saying so," exclaimed Lady Middleton, with brightened looks.

" Then I am sorry I said it, for you ought never to be happy, or at least you should never wear the appearance of being so. To be brisk, vivacious, cordial, or loud-voiced, are all the infallible tests of a vulgarian : a hearty cachinnation would almost justify the exclusion of the most approved member from the ranks of the *élite*. He who wants to laugh, must laugh in his sleeve, or be contented with a smile. If you would enjoy the reputation of being one of us, you must enjoy nothing else.

Be as listless, languid, and impassive, as you please, and remember that merriment is absolutely excluded by the exclusives."

"And yet melancholy is foreign to my temperament."

"You are not required to be melancholy, but indifferent; to be simply negative, and to treat the world as if it did not interest you enough to make you either happy or unhappy. I myself, for instance, am by no means in the latter predicament, and yet I ought to be so, for I am labouring under a sad attack of impoorness. In short, my dear Lady Middleton, I must request from you the loan of another hundred, which I doubt not I shall soon be enabled to repay. What with the sums yearly set apart for the education of his boys, the improvement of his estate, the gradual extinction of his father's debts, and other extravagances, Lord Rusport lavishes his money so idly, that I have not really wherewithal to defray such indispensable charges as my dressmakers' and jewellers' bills, card-money, and the current expenses of the day for the

knick-knacks that one cannot possibly avoid buying."

"I am glad that it is in my power to oblige you," said Lady Middleton, looking, however, by no means pleased, as she unlocked a rich japan escrutoire, and handed a bank-note to her friend—"and I trust there will be now no further obstacle or delay in procuring my admission into the Duchess's circle, which I find to be more difficult than I had anticipated."

Lady Barbara insinuated the bank-note into her tortoise-shell card-case, when, having successfully accomplished her main object, and feeling that after having thus humiliated herself she was entitled to retaliate upon her wealthy pupil, she exclaimed—"You must recollect that, in a commercial country like England—where a fortunate speculation in the stocks, a lucky hit in tar, tallow, or turpentine, or an improvement in spinning-jennies, may suddenly transform the mechanic into the *millionaire*—the leaders of fashion, the privileged conservators of their order, must protect themselves from invasion by certain barriers which

vulgar opulence cannot scale without the submission and consent of the garrison."

"There are means, however, of obtaining this consent," said Lady Middleton, letting her eye fall upon the card-case, but smiling most graciously, as if to neutralise the insinuation.

"You mean by favour," resumed her companion—"and even as such, it is a condescension extended very rarely, and only under particular circumstances. In your case, for instance, conspicuous as are your personal claims for admission into the sanctuary, I have had a hard battle to fight; and it was only as a concession to me, one of her oldest friends, that I could at last win the Duchess's consent. However, every thing is now definitively arranged. Your party is to be a musical *soirée*; the names of the performers whom you are to engage will be sent to you to-morrow; the list of the people to be invited will be drawn up by the Duchess and myself, with the express understanding that not a single friend of your own is to be included without our sanction; but the Duchess, wishing to be as

liberal as possible, yields to you without reserve the right of ordering the supper, that you may have an opportunity of displaying your acknowledged taste and magnificence."

"How exceedingly considerate of her Grace!"

"Oh! she is all kindness and condescension: but I had almost forgotten to mention one trifling condition in our little negotiation which, although the Duchess was too polite to mention it, she would, I am sure, wish to be observed. Were it any other individual I might hesitate in naming him, but as the objection is only to your husband, I have no scruple in saying that the Duchess would wish him not to appear."

"Indeed!" said Lady Middleton, colouring with indignation, and yet striving to assume a complacent smile. "Pleasant enough! pleasant enough! do you call this a trifle? I knew not that her Grace had ever seen Sir Matthew."

"O yes! once at church, when her brother, the Bishop, preached a charity sermon, Sir Matthew's rubicund face, voluminous nose, and aldermanic appearance, combined with what

she pleasantly called, his giant's laugh, as he waited for his carriage and saluted his passing friends, won her attention: she inquired his name, and you may infer the rest."

" This difficulty, my dear Lady Barbara, is insuperable, nor upon such humiliating terms do I ——"

" What nonsense! there is neither difficulty nor humiliation. Sir Matthew need not know anything of the matter. I have heard you often declare that he has no taste for music, hates large parties, and detests late hours. You can either, therefore, send him to bed before your visitants arrive, or prevail upon him to avoid annoyance by dining and sleeping at the house of some friend. Nothing is so simple; and your son, whose acquaintance her Grace is really desirous of making, can do the honours of the house instead of his father."

" True; I thank you for the hint: in this way it might be accomplished. But is not the Duchess despotic in her own peculiar empire? and could she not command her subjects to receive Sir Matthew, as well as myself?"

"What! were the friends of Galatæa obliged to invite Polyphemus? and was Vulcan always included in the cards addressed to his wife?"

Lady Middleton bowed graciously, assumed her most becoming smile, and stole a glance at the mirror.

"Ridiculous!" continued Lady Barbara—"Besides, her Grace is not so omnipotent as you might suppose. Fearless of every thing else, she lives in perpetual dread of ridicule. Were she to be seen patronising Sir Matthew, that horrid Tom Rashleigh, who is a most unmerciful quiz, and the absolute terror of the *beau monde*, would persecute her with lampoon and epigram; the professional witlings and slanderers would presently catch the cue; and she would be shown up every Sunday in the scandalous newspapers, of which she has a particular horror. I will fix an early day with the Duchess, and then you may proceed forthwith to consult Gunter, or your own purveyor, respecting the supper, which is all that you will have to attend to. And so your tutelar

goddess must take her flight. I have twenty visits to pay to as many of my dearest friends, and if I do not make haste, they will half of them have returned from their morning drives, and I shall find them at home ! Adieu, therefore, for the present."

"Adieu, my dear Lady Barbara ! you have laid me under an obligation which I feel that I shall never adequately repay."

"Tush ! tush ! among friends there should be no such vulgar words as repayment." Smiling half-derisively as she spoke, her ladyship dropped the card-case into her reticule, nodded listlessly to her friend, took up her Italian greyhound, who had remained couched at her feet, and sauntered from the room, patting and fondling her four-footed favourite, and bestowing upon him a variety of endearing epithets in Italian, as if that language were more intelligible to him than any other.

No sooner had her visitant departed, than Lady Middleton, summoning Dupin, and apprising him that she was not at home to any one, walked up and down her splendid draw-

ing-room, for her feelings would not allow her to sit still, revolving in her mind the particulars of the conference she had just held. Their friendship being uncongenial, and each party sufficiently clever to see through the designs and motives of the other, there was generally beneath the insidious smoothness of these interviews with Lady Barbara an under-current of mutual taunts and retorts, rather insinuated than expressed, and always kept within the bounds of good-breeding, but not the less keenly felt and resented on either side. Stung by the calm arrogance which had not very obliquely stigmatised herself as a vulgarian ; annoyed at the insulting proscription of her husband ; and by no means pleased that the offending party should so cavalierly extort from her another hundred pounds, which she little expected to recover, the predominant feeling in the mind of Lady Middleton was, nevertheless, that of gratification and triumph—an apparent inconsistency which may require some explanation.

Although of civic origin, a misfortune which

she never ceased to regret, her ladyship had been well educated; nature had been rather indulgent to her, both in form and feature, nor was she by any means deficient in talent; she dressed well, spoke well, wrote well; her voice was gentle and lady-like, her manners prepossessing, her appearance fashionable, and yet her mind remained essentially and irredeemably vulgar. Selfish and envious, at once ostentatious and sordid, overbearing and obsequious, her's was truly the "meanness that soars, and pride that licks the dust." Fired with emulation and hatred of a sister with whom she had quarrelled for no other reason than because she had made a better match than herself, it was the great object of her life to mortify by eclipsing her in equipage, house, and establishment. This was the motive that had urged her incessant attacks upon Sir Matthew, until she had fairly worried him into a removal from Bloomsbury Square to Portland Place; for the furnishing and decoration of which latter residence, she had received a fixed sum from her plodding husband, who had neither

genius nor time for such occupations. This commission she executed with a tact and good taste that rarely forsook her, so far as externals were concerned. While her rooms displayed a becoming splendour and chaste magnificence, she had carefully eschewed that gorgeousness and over-fineness, which, in the mansion of many a civic Crœsus, or newly enriched upstart, seems to throw in your teeth the opulence of its possessor, and to arrogate homage as well as admiration. The sure way to win her heart, or rather to prove her want of one, was to declare that she had evinced more taste, and possessed a much handsomer house, than her sister and rival, Mrs. Howard Maltby ; when she would enjoy a spleenful triumph, which, with all her exterior politeness and self-possession, she sometimes found it difficult to conceal.

It was to establish beyond question her superiority over this competitor, who had been unable to obtain admission to the higher coteries of fashion, that Lady Middleton had entered into the negotiation with the Duchess, of

which we have furnished a brief outline, and had advanced money, with much apparent readiness but with great real reluctance, to Lady Barbara Rusport. As Sir Matthew was a shrewd calculator of household expenses, and would not have supplied a shilling for any such ridiculous object, she had drawn these funds from a private purse, which she kept replenished by a system of pinching and even painful domestic economy, little in accordance with the parade and state of her establishment. Denying comforts and almost necessities to others, in order that she herself might make an additional show of luxuries, she kept her servants upon board-wages, grudged them every petty gratification, withheld from them the customary pickings and perquisites, and practised the most vigilant and illiberal parsimony wherever it could be exercised without detection. Though she never forgot herself so far as to scold or wrangle, her manner towards inferiors was haughty and offensive, even when she affected condescension. This misplaced thrift entailed its usual discomfort.

Her servants were perpetually leaving her ; none at last would apply who understood their business, or were worth having ; the house had been twice robbed by men who had been engaged in a hurry without due inquiry ; and poor Sir Matthew was often piqued to regret the happy days, when he had only a single maid of all-work, and brushed his own coat.

" Yes, yes," said Lady Middleton, as she paced up and down her drawing-room—" I think this *coup d'état* will effectually mortify Mrs. Maltby." (It was thus she usually termed her sister, gratifying a paltry malice by suppressing the genteeler prefix of Howard.) " The names of my illustrious visitants shall be blazoned in the fashionable Journals, nor shall she pretend not to have seen the list, for I myself will take care to send her half-a-dozen papers." In this strain, occasionally diversified by considering how she should decorate her rooms and her supper-table, she continued to enjoy her anticipated triumph, until her reveries were dissipated by the well-known knock and

ring of Sir Matthew. Surprised at the lateness of the hour, for her husband seldom varied ten minutes in the time of his arrival at home, Lady Middleton rang for her maid, and, hurrying to her own apartment, began to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER II.

High-built abundance heap on heap—for what?
To breed new wants and beggar us the more,
Then make a richer scramble for the throng?
Soon as this feeble pulse which leaps so long,
Almost by miracles, is tir'd with play,
Like rubbish from exploding engines thrown,
Our magazines of hoarded trifles fly.

YOUNG.

Though Lady Barbara had alluded to the rubicund face, voluminous nose, and loud triumphant chuckle, of Sir Matthew rather for the purpose of mortifying his wife than of drawing a correct portrait, she had not deviated into caricature. If to the sketch she had drawn we add a moderately protuberant stomach, a burly figure, and the confident walk and look

of a man who feels that he has made his own way in the world, and is proud of the wealth he has achieved, a tolerably accurate notion will have been formed of the Baronet's personal appearance. And yet this combination did not by any means present so vulgar a result as might have been anticipated. Good height, and an upright carriage, combined with a half-bald head and well-appointed clothes, imparted to him a certain air of respectability; while his flushed good-humoured countenance and victorious laugh might have almost led a hasty observer to conclude that he beheld some elderly *bon-vivant* of the Corinthian class. Any such delusion, however, would be instantly dissipated when he began to speak; for not only did he retain a strong west-country accent, with some portion of its dialect, but he frequently violated the minuter rules of grammar, and in his hurried, bubble-bubble way of speaking, would as often make mistakes as to meaning. This was more especially observable when he quoted the homely proverbs originally instilled into him by a careful mother, but which

he had so long recited by rote, that he ceased to pay much attention to their import, and was apt to transpose or intermix them till they formed a ludicrous *imbroglio*. Though evidently uneducated, and offering the last living specimen of the vulgar civic baronet of the old school, it was not less manifest to those who conversed with him that he possessed considerable shrewdness, and so fair a share of worldly wisdom that he was seldom likely to act the part of an ignoramus, however he might occasionally talk like one.

Having made a hasty toilet in a dressing-room on the ground-floor, for, being somewhat short-breathed, he had a mortal objection to any unnecessary climbing of stairs, Sir Matthew ascended to the drawing-room, in which he found no other present occupant than his daughter Cecilia, who welcomed him with a smile, and received in return a hearty and audible kiss upon the cheek, followed by the exclamation of:

“ Lord love ‘ee, Ciss ! what hast got upon thy head ? looks like a hay-stack with a man

a-top of it. Not the first girl, I warrant, that has had a man in her head. Hey, Ciss ! Hick, hick, hick ! Ha, ha, ha !”

“ These high curls are the fashion,” replied the daughter.

“ Thought the girls carried their heads high enough before. Had ‘ee there ! When your mother and I was in Lawrence-Pountney Lane, how we should have stared to see you carrying such a spread o’ topsail with so little ballast in your hold. Wouldn’t underwrite you for fifty per cent. Sure to capsize in the first gale of wind. Hick, hick, hey !”

“ La, Pa ! I wish you would never allude to Lawrence-Pountney Lane. Mamma, you know, cannot bear to hear the word mentioned, and says we ought to forget all about it.”

“ 'Spose we did, dost think other folks would do the same ? Shutting your own eye won’t make the world blind, will’t ? For my part I’m proud on’t, and even if you and your mother baint, you had better blab it at once, and seem not to care about it. Didn’t know Dick Swayles, didst ? Bad health ; obliged to

go every year to Harrowgate and the watering-places ; always lived at a boarding-house ; first day at dinner rapped table for silence, stood up and addressed company : ‘ Ladies and gentlemen ! my name’s Dick Swayles, of Fenchurch Street, London, Russia broker. I have a sister who made a runaway match with a fellow of bad character, named Hacklestone ; and a second cousin who was transported for swindling. That’s all the harm I know of the whole family, and I mention it now to save you all the trouble of ferreting it out. If there’s any good in me or mine, I’m sure you would not wish to hear of it, and I shall therefore say nothing upon the subject.’ Hick, hick ! Droll fellow that, hey, Ciss ?”

“ We were in very different circumstances, Sir, at the time to which you allude.”

“ Ay, ay, child, so we were. Paid no rent then ; house belonged to the partnership. Fool to go to Bloomsbury Square ; greater fool still to come to Portland Place, where rent and taxes stand me in—never mind. Meg’s doing, not mine. Don’t like it, and never

shall. Twenty men may lead a horse to the water, but one can't make him drink. Where's Gale, hey?"

"I have not seen my brother since breakfast. I dare say he is still in his study."

"Dare say he be. Can't think how a fellow can be poring over books when he ought to be thinking of dinner. Talk of digesting what you read! Fegs! if a chap had nothing else to digest he'd soon be a walking atomy. No, no: fine words butter no parsnips; solid praise better than empty pudding. What say, Ciss, hey?"

Before any reply could be made, Lady Middleton entered the room, when the baronet, who was more kindly and polite in trifles than might have been expected from his unpolished way of speaking, placed a chair by the fireside, pushed an ottoman to the front of it, and holding out his hand, exclaimed in a friendly voice:

"Well, Meg dear, how do 'ee now? thee'dst a headach in the morning."

"Prythee, Sir Matthew," replied the lady,

" do not call me Meg. You know I have a particular objection to that vulgar contraction."

" Well, well, I see thee'st offended by smiling so graciously; but I quite forgot; I meant it kindly, and somehow or other, when I wish'ee well, Meg comes more naturally to my mouth than Lady Middleton. Head's better, is it? Glad on't, glad on't. What visitors have'ee had to-day?"

" The last who left me was Lady Barbara Rusport."

" What! that lean harridan that goes about craning up her long painted throat out of a low carriage, like a goose in a hen-coop?"

" Even if Lady Barbara were not a woman of distinguished fashion and elegance, it does not become you to speak in such terms of my particular friend. To be sure, she does daub herself most unmercifully with red and white; the long whitewashed throat of which she is so proud is quite frightful; and at her age there is something preposterous in her affecting to dress like a girl of fifteen."

“ Why, Lady Middleton, I thought she was your particular friend ! Hick, hick !”

“ It is precisely on that account that I am vexed at seeing her thus expose herself to merited ridicule ; but I have observed that if women are once turned of forty without having any grey hairs they invariably discard caps and take to girls’ head-dresses, as if people would look at the *chevelure* instead of the face when they came to reckon their age. Ridiculous !”

“ Mindee don’t imitate it then, though it be the fashion. For my part, I had rather old Time should claw off my hair then scratch wrinkles in my face. Bald already : cheat him there. Any other visitors, Meg ?—Lady Middleton, I mean.”

“ None that you know. Yes, Mrs. Burroughs.”

“ A prying, sly, flaunting busy-body. Hate that woman.”

“ She is no favourite of mine ; but she is a very useful person. To-day, however, I could well have dispensed with her, for her loud

and incessant talking drove away Sir Dennis Lifford."

"What, Sir Dennis again! Why, he has called every day this week."

"The fact is, Sir Matthew, that *entre nous*—"

Here the wife drew her chair close to her husband's, and dropped her voice into a whisper, while the daughter, who saw that her presence was not required, sauntering to the other end of the room, stood before a tall mirror, pretending to arrange her lofty curls, but in reality contemplating the effect of her dress and figure. With the assistance of a little vanity, in which few young persons of either sex are totally deficient, she found reason to be satisfied with the survey; although, in point of fact, there was nothing very marked, or that calls for particular description, either in her form or face. Had she been in humble life, she would have excited little or no attention; but, being the only daughter of a wealthy baronet, she was generally admitted to be pretty, at the least; and indeed there were several needy

young men in the circle of her acquaintance, who, being smitten *par les beaux yeux de sa cassette*, hesitated not to call her handsome. Well educated and naturally well disposed, she might have been an attractive girl, had she not been misled by Lady Middleton, who not only taught her to be ashamed of her own father, affectionate as he was, and of his city acquaintance, but filled her head with the same foolish and aspiring notions that perverted her own, about the *beau monde*, the *haut ton*, and the polite circles.

While she was yet viewing herself in the mirror, the second dinner-bell sounded—for, in imitation of larger establishments, Lady Middleton had ordered this useless parade to be observed ; when Sir Matthew, starting up, even before Dupin came to announce that the meal was ready, offered his arm to his lady, exclaiming :

“ Come along, come along : never wait dinner for any one, still less for my own son. Strange boy that ! neither ride nor drive : never make any thing of him. No wonder

they called him crazy Middleton at Cambridge. Mad indeed, not to be ready for dinner. Hick, hick, hey?"

"I question whether his toilet detains him," said Lady Middleton with a sneering smile, as they sate down; "he does not trouble himself much with sacrificing to the Graces."

"Nay now," said his sister, "I think Gale is always graceful. He is so handsome and well-made that he cannot look otherwise; but I do wish he would pay a little more attention to the fashion of the day. He might take a few hints from Sir Dennis Lifford."

"Ay, indeed," said Lady Middleton, "Sir Dennis is a perfect model of high-born and high-bred elegance and gentility, always dressed in the supreme of the fashion, and yet without any foppery or dandyism. Gale had better remain the sloven that he is, than vainly attempt to imitate the inimitable."

As Sir Matthew, who was a professed epicure, as well as a free and almost invincible toper, seldom said any thing at dinner that did not bear immediate reference to the viands

or wines before him, he took no part in this colloquy, confining himself to occasional exclamations of, "Good soup—good soup, hey ! leetle too salt : toast not fried, shocking ! Devil sends bad meat, heaven sends good cooks, ha ! Fish tough ; bought it of Higgins too : rascal ! — No nutmeg in sauce. Shameful ! Glass wine, dear, hey ? Ont'ee join us, Ciss ? Ha, capital Madeira ! went out twice in the Ganges, Captain Tugwell."

At this moment the son hurried into the room, making many apologies for being so late, which he attributed to his not having heard the dinner-bell. "See what 'ee lost, boy !" said the father, pointing reproachfully to the table. "Fish cold, soup cold. Serve 'ee right."

"Oh, Sir, it will do perfectly well for me," replied Gale, proceeding to help himself. "I am only sorry that I should have appeared so rude."

Vexed as Sir Matthew really was at his impunctuality upon so important an occasion as dinner, his paternal bowels yearned with such

compassion when he saw him about to select the very worst part of the fish, that, without stopping to empty his mouth, he sputtered out, “ My dear boy ! what ‘ee about, what ‘ee about ? underneath part turbot always best. Put it back, put it back, hey !”—after which advice he addressed himself to a saddle of mutton, his favourite dish, with such assiduity, that for some time he did not utter a word, excepting two or three interjections, expressive of perfect satisfaction.

Any one who had overheard Cecilia’s observation about her brother would have recognised its truth the moment he came into the room. Rendered perfectly free and unembarrassed by his utter indifference to appearances, his well-proportioned form was never thrown into an ungraceful attitude, while his youthful aspect, dark intelligent eyes, thoughtful brow, and earnest countenance, fully warranted the commendation that had been bestowed upon them, in spite of the wanness of his cheek and an expression of unhappiness that overshadowed his handsome features like a cloud. For his

dress, however, if scrutinised by the rigid code of fashion, no valid defence could be offered. His clothes, indeed, were in good preservation, nor did they seem to have been made by an unskilful artist; but they were unbrushed, and put on in so careless and untidy a manner that they looked worse, both in quality and fashion, than they really were. Instead of neckcloth, of which he could never bear the irksome restraint, a broad black ribbon was passed loosely round his throat; and his noble head of dark hair, parted at top, and falling on either side in waving curls, however becoming and picturesque it might have appeared to an artist, would have been condemned by a fashionist as utterly at variance with every tonsorial mode that then existed. He ate little and spoke less, seeming to labour under a depression of spirits, upon which his father occasionally rallied him with a boisterous coarseness, that rather served to aggravate the seriousness it was intended to dispel.

It was one of Lady Middleton's imitative affections, copied of course by Cecilia, to speak

French to Dupin, who was a Parisian, and understood but little English. To Sir Matthew, who knew not a word of the Gaul's language, this was a subject of sore annoyance, as it sometimes occasioned his orders to be misunderstood, when he would get into a passion, and swear at the foreigner for his involuntary mistakes. During the dessert he took occasion to stigmatise the fashion of selecting aliens for domestics, as not less absurd than unfeeling and unpatriotic, at a moment when so many Englishmen were starving for want of employment. The son, however indifferent he had been to the previous topics of conversation, which indeed had chiefly borne a reference to the dinner, eagerly took up the Baronet's argument, his whole countenance becoming animated, and his feelings evidently roused, as with a vehement eloquence he vindicated the claims of the lower orders of his fellow-countrymen, and exposed the cruelty of bestowing the situations to which they had a natural right upon aliens and strangers. Piqued at his indignant tone, which she thought disrespectful to herself,

Lady Middleton vindicated the practice he had condemned, declaring that no persons of the least fashion or refinement could bear to have an English animal about them when once they had been accustomed to a foreigner, and concluding with a warm eulogy of Dupin, as one of the honestest, cleverest, and best, servants that ever came into a house.

“ My dear Gale !” said the sister, following up the mother’s argument, “ where can you have possibly picked up such antiquated notions ? Do you not find in every house of distinction either a Frenchman or a Swiss, as *chef de cuisine*, *maitre d’hôtel*, or in some other capacity ; and can you possibly deny that they are a thousand times more clever and polished than our horrid English creatures ? Oh, the heavy-handed and heavy-headed bunglers ! How can you compare them with our dear, quickwitted, and fairy-footed Dupin, who seems to be everywhere at once.”

“ Ay, and what’s the upshot ? ” asked the father ; “ find him nowhere when you want him. Had him there tho’ ! Hick, hick, hey ! ”

Sir Matthew then proceeded to enforce his former objections, and his lady as vigorously defended her own positions, her smile becoming more bland, and her language more coldly courteous, as she felt her ground to be untenable, until at length, in order to terminate a discussion in which she was losing ground as well as patience, she arose, and retired with her daughter to the drawing-room, bowing as she departed with an expression of peculiar complacency. When the ladies had quitted the apartment, Sir Matthew, drawing round his chair to the fire, and desiring his son to do the same, poured out a couple of bumpers, and, after swallowing the contents of his own glass, and refilling it, exclaimed—"No good to be done with an empty glass, or an empty stomach; *ex nihil nihil fit*: nothink can come of nothink: there, you dog! See, I understand Latin, though they tell me I can't speak English. Fudge! Gale, my dear boy! glad the women are gone, for I want to have a long chat with 'ee, and haven't had an opportunity since 'ee came back from Sussex. Why, lad,

thee seemest more in the dumps and doldrums than ever. Come, tell us what's the matter with 'ee. Understand thee'st been dangling after Chritty Norberry, at Maple Hatch. Hope not: knew her father a drysalter in Watling-street; used to call him surly Sam upon 'Change; failed; retired into the country; poor as a church mouse. Hit the head on the right nail, hey?"

"No indeed, Sir; I was as grave as I am now before ever I knew Miss Norberry. If I am not so cheerful as you could wish, I am sorry for it; especially as I fear my dejection must be a constitutional defect, since I cannot assign any particular cause for it."

"Tell 'ee what, boy. Think it's all owing to your grubbing so much in your study, and poking and poring over those plaguy books. Wouldn't mind if they were journal and ledger, cash-book and day-book. Some sense in them; giv'ee salt to your porridge; but as to your poets and philosophers, your Shakspeare and Milton, and Beaumont and Fletcher, and Boulton and Watt, and the devil knows what,

wouldn't give five pounds for the whole kit. Can't eat 'em, nor drink 'em, nor make a jacket of 'em, nor pay bills with 'em ; then, what are they good for, hey?"

It was a peculiarity in the character of Gale Middleton, who, from his long habit of thinking aloud, was almost unconscious of his soliloquies, that when his feelings were aroused, he would occasionally burst into some rapturous effusion in the presence of auditors who, so far from sympathising with his enthusiasm, were even unable to comprehend, or even to account for it, except by whispering to themselves, or to one another, the significant words, "Crazy Middleton."

"What are they good for?" echoed the youth—his pale cheek kindling, and his eye flashing with animation. "O my books, my dear, my precious books! my delights, my guides, my chosen friends and companions, the miracle and magic of my life! Ye are to me as guardian angels, bright-eyed, peace-breathing, seraph-winged, and happy-hearted, who waft around me with your pinions the tranquil

airs of heaven, and reconcile me to this melancholy world by abstracting me for a time from the contemplation of its miseries!"

" Whew!" whistled the Baronet, setting down his glass, and staring at his son—" What's the matter? got a fit? struck comical, hope 'ee dont bite. But that's always your way. Either as glum and grave as a bankrupt at Guildhall, or else away you go like a rocket, up into the clouds, whizz! fizz! crack! Can't speak plain sense and good English as I do?"

" You asked me, Sir," said the son, in a more composed tone, " what books were good for; and I would enquire of you in return, whether you have ever considered the mysterious, I had almost said the divine, nature of a book?"

" Not I! knew something about the cash-book, and the waste-book, and the bill-book, and the pay-book. Made my fortune by that sort o' library. What will 'ee ever make by yours? Had 'ee there, Gale, hey, hick!"

" Have you ever reflected, Sir, that thought, which a French materialist has defined to be an invisible secretion of the brain; thought, which

I hold to be an emanation from the great fount of divine intelligence, after its subtle and volatile spirit receiving, as it were, a corporeal form, has been rendered visible to every eye by the invention of letters, and imperishable by means of printing, may be diffused in the form of a book, through all time and all space; may be preserved as a fresh and perfect portrait of an individual's mind for thousands of years after the marble or brazen images of his body shall have crumbled into dust? Marvelous and sublime is the nature, stupendous and almost omnipotent is the power of a book! It is a sort of material soul, a visible, tangible, indestructible, intellect, living and yet dead, dead and yet living, speaking at the same moment to the four quarters of the earth, and yet silent as the unknown grave in which, perchance, its author sleeps; spread throughout the whole world, and yet compact enough to be carried in an infant's hand. Strange that the signs of ideas, stamped upon the perishable pulp of rags, should be more enduring than

adamant or the earth-rooted rock ! Oh, Sir, books are sacred, are awful things. They are the spirits of the departed, visiting us, not to surprise and terrify, but to guide, to comfort, and protect."

" Riddle-me-riddle-me ree ! What sort o' lingo do ye call this ? Wont do, Gale, wont do. Your books must be bad spirits at all events, else 'ee wouldn't be in such bad spirits thyself. Had 'ee there boy, hey !"

" You only see me when I am removed from them ; if I am gloomy, it is because I am deprived of that cheering light which perhaps shines more intensely upon me than upon others."

" Like enough ; cause it comes in through a crack in your skull. 'Spose that's the reason they called 'ee Crazy Middleton at Cambridge. Had 'ee again there ; hey, hick, hick ! Lookee, Gale. Listened patiently to all your rigmarole, now you must listen to mine. Told 'ee I wanted to have a long chat with 'ee ; but fill glass first. What ! not drink any more !

Lord love 'ee, poor boy ! did hope to make a three bottle man of 'ee, if couldn't make any thing else."

The baronet tossed off his bumper, and immediately refilled his glass, which was indeed his invariable habit, when, drawing his chair nearer to his son's, and hemming loudly and lustily, as if to clear his voice for a long oration, he thus proceeded.

" Look 'ee, my dear boy, Meg and I,—call her Meg now, 'cause she ai'nt here,—Meg and I have had a deal o'talk about 'ee; both very unhappy to find 'ee so glum and dumpish, and we've settled it's all because 'ee haven't got any business or occupation. Every young man ought to be employed. Idleness root of all evil. Devil tempts other men, but idlers tempt him. No pains no gains. Bad day's work when 'ee refused to come into the firm of Middleton, Thwaytes, and Hobson. Only chap in all England that wouldn't have jumped mast-high at such an offer."

" Of this, Sir, I am perfectly aware, and I hope not ungrateful for your intended kind-

ness ; but I stated my reasons so fully at the time——”

“ Reasons, sirrah ! there can be no reasons for that which is utterly unreasonable. In another year your cousin, Caleb Ball, will take place meant for you, and come perhaps to be one of the first men in the city when you’re nobody. Amazing clever chap that Caleb : wonderful ! Understands business, and sticks to it like a leech. Always first and last in the counting-house. Don’t know what we should do without him. But that’s neither here nor there ; talking of you, not him. Sent’ee to college when ’ee decided on not being a merchant, and had fine accounts, though they did call’ee Crazy Middleton, that ’ee got prizes, and came to be first wrangler. Don’t wrangle much at home ; good-tempered enough for that matter. Took for granted, after I went to such an expense, that yee’d follow some profession ; but deuce a bit ; here thee beest, running down to Sussex, to wander in the woods and spout poetry to crows and pigeons ; or else coming up to Portland Place, only to mope over books,

till thee'st as down in the mouth as the root of my tongue. A murrain take all the musty rubbish ! Why casn't make thyself useful and respectable ? Know thee'st got enough to live on ; but what of that ? Any thing's better than idleness. Why couldn't be a doctor or a surgeon ?"

" To be a butcher of human carcases, a dissector of dead bodies, and a tormentor of living ones ; to be conversant with misery, anguish, and putrifying sores ; to pour drugs of which I know little, into a frame of which I know less ; to see none but sufferers, to breathe for ever the loathsome atmosphere of sick rooms, to be a daily hoverer over the bed of death, not always free from the consciousness, and never from the apprehension, that I may have shortened the life which I have been paid for prolonging—horrible !"

" Fudge ! soon get reconciled to it ; musn't be too fine for use ; mouse in mittens catches no cat. Will 'ee be a counsellor then ?"

" What ! to live amidst the rottenness and abomination of our moral nature ; to be let

behind the curtain of the human heart, and discover all its hideous corruptions, its fraud, its avarice, its envy, hatred, and malice; to feed upon quarrels, and to live in an arena of perpetual strife; or to stand in the courts like a forensic bravo, ready, for a miserable fee, to uphold the cause of oppression, falsehood, and injustice; or for another miserable fee, to turn round and attack the identical parties whom I had just been vindicating! Faugh!"

"I say once more, fudge! all stuff and nonsense! How do others do? Why then I 'spose thee'l be a parson, ont'ee?"

"Ay, Sir, that would I gladly, if I felt within me that divine call by which every minister of the Gospel avers himself to be actuated, and if apostolical ordination would confer upon me the self-denial and lowliness of the poor fishermen of Galilee, who, when they went forth upon their mission, were ordered not even to provide any subsistence for their journey, not to take staff, nor scrip, nor money. But I cannot be as a blind man holding a lamp, or as a finger-post pointing the way which I do

not follow. To become a struggler for promotion in the spiritual arena ; to enroll myself a member of a wealthy and worldly hierarchy ; to read, in almost every page of the Sacred Volume, that a rich man can scarcely enter into the kingdom of Heaven, and that pomps and vanities are the destruction of the soul ; yet to seek, with the whole energy of that soul, to obtain wealth, distinctions, state, and all the corrupting luxuries of an episcopal palace ; to make my whole life, in short, give the lie to my lips, to my professed creed, and to my solemn averment at the time of ordination,—this, Sir, this is a self-sacrifice to which I could never submit."

"Stuff, boy, stuff! Mustn't read every thing backwards like a Hebrew book. Sure there are poor parsons enough in England, ay, and as good men and good Christians as ever trod upon earth. If went into the Church though, *should* like to call 'ee my lord, and see thee a bishop."

"So, Sir, I fear, might I ; and I would not seek the mouth of the devil's den for the pe-

rilous chance that he may not strive to draw me into it."

" Of all which rigmarole nonsense the English and the upshot is this, that 'ee wont do any thing but lounge about, and poke over old books, hey ! I wish 'eed take a leaf out o' my book. Lord love 'ee, Gale ! when I was your age ;—tell 'ee all about it, and then perhaps ye may be shamed into imitating your father, and doing something for yourself.—No more wine ? well, then, I must, for I got to drink for both." The Baronet, who had by this time emptied the first bottle, now rang for a second, and, having quaffed a preliminary bumper, thus proceeded.

" Look'ee, boy ; when I first came up from Somersetshire, went as wharf-clerk to Nat. Giblet, the ship-chandler at Rotherhithe—bow-winded counting-house hanging over the river, warehouse above it, three stories high ; cranes to each, barrels, tierces, and firkins, always going up and down—passed whole day on the wharf, slept over a coal-shed, smelt pitch and tar, and heard the creaking of cranes, the pop-

pling of water, and the wrangling of barge-men for fifteen years, until Nat. Giblet died. Knowing hand, that Nat. ; left money behind him ; always stuck to the main chance ; many a mickle makes a little—hey, boy, do 'ee mind ? Well, Nat left me nothing, and so I determined to have all that he left."

"Indeed, Sir, how was that to be accomplished?"

"Listen, boy, and learn. Good trade—widow wanted to carry it on—but I had curried favour with all the captains—threatened to set up an opposition ; proposed partnership for life ; and as I had begun with making myself master of the business, ended with making myself master o' the widow, and fifteen thousand pounds beside. What 'ee think o' that, hey? Hick, hick, hick ! Ha, ha, ha ! Well, good trade and good credit now ; buy and sell with the best of 'em. Government advertised large contract for Irish butter for Navy ; war time then, you know. Took it at very low rate ; went and bought at higher prices every firkin there was in market :

fools upon 'Change chuckled and rubbed hands ; thought I was ruined. Knew what I was about : old birds not caught with chaff :—none so blind as them that can't see : told Government I had made a bad bargain, and couldn't stand to it ; paid five thousand penalty, according to my bonds. What was the upshot of that ? Fresh contract advertised ; nobody could offer, 'cause I had bought up all there was ; put it in then at my own price—Victualling Board obliged to take it ;—cleared thirteen thousand pounds by the job. Hick, hick, hick ! Say, Gale, when will 'ee make such a capital hit as that, hey ?"

No reply was given to this interrogatory.

" Well, boy, shortly after moved to Laurence-Pountney Lane, where you and Ciss were born. As family increased, extended my concerns ; always cut my cloth according to my coat ; took in partners, became a general merchant ; and here it was that I decided on making a purchase which proved a better spec to me than even the widow, or the butter contract. Can'st guess what it was, hey ?"

" I cannot even form a conjecture."

" A seat in Parliament, ye dog !" cried Sir Matthew, smiling triumphantly, and digging his knuckle into his son's ribs. " Saw clear enough that this was the only way to get at the loaves and fishes. Must hold up your dish when it rains pottage. Always stuck to the Government through thick and thin : claw me and I 'll claw you : one good turn deserves another. Never out of way when wanted for thirteen years, and during all that time never once voted against the Minister."

" How, Sir ! did it never happen that the speeches and arguments of the opposition induced you to change your opinion ?"

" A hundred times, ye gull ; but I never changed my vote. What did I buy a seat for, except for what it would bring. Shan't I have my pennorth out of my penny ? Paid me capitally. Besides fair share of jobs and contracts, always carried on in name of my partners—for I 'm last man to violate law, or do anything wrong—I came in for pickings and

lickings (little fishes eat sweet), and was enabled to get clerkships and other berths, abroad or at home, for the poor relations who trooped up to me when they found I had become a great man. Took a house now in Bloomsbury Square, where your poor mother died. Next year, minister knowing me to be a sure card, a stanch Tory, and disinterested friend of my king and country, got me made a Baronet. Some of my old chums, who had often seen me rolling casks or carrying firkins from the wharf at Rotherhithe into the barges alongside, quizzed my new title; but let them laugh that win—when the fox ate sour grapes, said he couldn't reach 'em, hey? Well, boy! wanted a mother for you and Ciss, to bring 'ee up, and bring 'ee out. Didn't care so much for money now—looked out for something genteel, and lady-like, well educated, and all that sort o' thing; fell in with Meg Jenkinson, the daughter of a factor in Basinghall-street, and made her Lady Middleton. Good spec that too! only she never ceased wheedling and

teasing till —— Hallo ! who's coming in at this time o' night ?”

The Baronet broke suddenly off upon the opening of the door, and we shall avail ourselves of the interruption in his narrative, to close the chapter.

CHAPTER III.

How much of the future should be let into the present in the progress of the human mind, and enoble and purify without raising us above the sphere of our usefulness, to qualify us for what we ought to seek without unfitting us for that to which we must submit, are great and difficult problems, which can be but indifferently solved.

SIR J. MACKINTOSH.

SIR MATTHEW'S exclamation had been occasioned by the entrance of a snug, trim, and withal a somewhat demure-looking young man ; his thick, thatch-like, mud-coloured hair combed straight upon his head ; his neckcloth turned down with a finical neatness ; his clothes spruce and tidy, without a particle of fashion or elegance ; his gait awkward, his manner vulgarly deferential, and his complexion of that

wan, sodden hue, which is almost peculiar to the dwellers in the civic quarters of London. “ Ha, Caleb Ball !” cried Sir Matthew, “ what brings ‘ee up here, lad ? thought ‘ee never left the counting-house, on foreign post nights, afore eleven or twelve o’clock.”

“ But rarely indeed, Sir Matthew,” replied the nephew, “ nor shall I now be long absent from it ; I shall hurry back immediately ; but I thought I might venture to run up to Portland Place, and intrude upon you for a few minutes, as I am the bearer of good news.”

“ Ha ! so much the better, so much the better ! luck’s luck now-a-days. But what ‘ee keep standing for ? sit down, take glass wine, and then say your say.” Doing as he was bid, and drinking respectfully to the health of his uncle and cousin, Caleb put the glass coyly to his lips, and then said—“ I am very happy to inform you, Sir Matthew, that our missing ship, the *Arethusa*, from Buenos Ayres, is arrived.”

“ Arrived ! thee dostn’t say so, lad ! Fegs !

I'm right glad to hear it, for we were plaguy short insured upon her."

"I knew you were anxious upon the subject, and I felt it to be my duty to give you immediate information. Captain Bracebridge, having travelled post from Poole, arrived at the counting-house about an hour ago with the ship's papers."

"Clever fellow that Bracebridge, hey, hick ! 'Spose we drink his health—fill glasses, lads. Good old port this ! stick to your ribs ; better than all your wishy-washy French stuff, hey ? Ship all right, Caleb?"

"Yes, Sir Matthew ; only while the captain was off Madeira, he cut away an anchor and cable in a gale of wind. Both were a good deal worn, and he had been waiting some time for a fair opportunity of getting them renewed at the expense of the underwriters."

"Short insured though, Caleb."

"True, Sir Matthew, but this being a general average, will be spread over the whole cargo ; we shall have to deduct a third from

the cost of the cable for the difference between old and new, but still the captain says we shall be gainers."

"Clever fellow that Bracebridge, and yet Hobson tells me he knows nothing hardly of navigation, hey, hick?"

"Oh! Sir Matthew, what does that signify? he is the best captain for his owners that ever stepped upon deck. When he commanded the Adventure, from Jamaica, and learned, upon speaking a ship at sea, that logwood was hardly saleable at any price in the London market, do you remember how cleverly he waited for a heavy sea, and threw the whole of ours overboard, to prevent the ship from foundering? he! he!"

"Hick, hick, ha! ha! ha! so he did, boy, and we made a capital sale to the underwriters: monstrous clever fellow that Bracebridge, hey? thought he'd turn up sooner or later. However, bird in bush worth two in the hand. Full ship now, Caleb?"

"Yes, Sir Matthew, and many packages upon deck. He took in some hides for ballast,

a few light articles for dunnage, and about fifty tons upon freight, on very favourable terms, as you will see by the copy of the charterparty which I have brought with me; but the rest of the cargo is all for account of Middleton, Thwaytes, and Hobson, and consists chiefly of indigo in serons, cochineal, drugs, and a few boxes of dollars. He had not brought the bills of lading with him, but, from a hasty glance at the invoices, I see the cochineal is laid in very low, and the indigo will also leave a handsome profit. The *Arethusa's* arrival will be known to-morrow by the port letters at Lloyd's, and I dare say we shall have our counting-house full of brokers; but I have desired the captain to disclose nothing of what she brings, lest it might flatten the market; and in the mean time, if you think proper, you may sell, deliverable on arrival. Nobody need know her cargo, for though she has clean bills of health, and will not therefore be detained at Stangate Creek, she cannot be reported inwards at the Custom-house for this week to come."

"Good idea, good idea, Caleb! understand

trap ; up to snuff and a pinch above it. Great man one of these days, hey, hick !”

“ Yes, Sir Matthew, if I should ever be so fortunate as to become a partner in the house—”

“ If, ye dog, to be sure thee wilt, when articles are renewed a few months hence : all settled. Ah, Gale, Gale, my dear boy ! see what 'ee lost. Stand in your own light like man in the moon, or thief in a candle. Hick, hick, hick ! ha ! ha ! ha !”

“ The present arrangement,” said the son, “ is infinitely the best. Caleb is expressly fitted for the situation, while I am as utterly unqualified for it.”

“ Ay, and for everything else : had 'ee there, boy ! Well, Caleb, what more ?”

“ Nothing, Sir Matthew, but what is good. Captain Bracebridge touched at Rio, and he brought home bills of exchange for proceeds of the consignment to Da Costa and Co. by the Charming Kitty. They are remitted at a very favourable exchange, and are drawn on the house of Hicks and Hoggins.”

"Don't much like those chaps: too many kites flying, hey!"

"Nor do I, Sir Matthew; I should be sorry to discount their acceptances at a long date, but these are at twenty-one days' sight, and are moreover endorsed by Oliveira and Crump, who are as good as the Bank."

"All right, all right. Any farther news?"

"The Captain brings accounts that the Severn, Swainson; and the Nautilus, Davis, have been both cast away at St. Salvador's, and utterly lost."

"The devil! do 'ee call that good news? Underwritten them both, haven't we? Capital ships too. Both stand A 1. in the Register books, don't 'em?"

"Yes, Sir Matthew, or I am sure you would never have underwritten them to the amount of eight hundred pounds; but as I considered that they ought to have arrived some weeks ago, I suggested to Mr. Hobson to re-insure them, which was done last week, at a small advance on the original premium."

"Did 'ee, lad! good! good! capital thought

—clever fellow ! tip us your daddle !” So vigorous and hearty was Sir Matthew’s probation of his nephew’s commercial shrewdness, that he almost crushed his hand as he shook it, and then pouring out a bumper, desired him to toss it off, and drink a good sale to the *Arethusa*’s cargo. “ I thank you very kindly, Sir Matthew,” replied the clerk, “ but I never take more than one glass ; and I must hasten back to the counting-house, for Mr. Hobson said he could not make up the letters till I returned to close the account current with *Delafosse Brothers*, and to check the calculation of exchange on the foreign bills.” So saying, he rose up, made a respectful bow, put back his chair, and quitted the apartment.

For some time after his disappearance, Sir Matthew did nothing but sing the praises of his nephew ; first, because he really felt what he said ; secondly, because he wished to pique his son, if possible, into an imitation of his cousin’s commercial talent and industry ; and, thirdly, because every time he mentioned Caleb

Ball, or compared him with other young men, who had risen to wealth and eminence in the city, he had an excuse for tossing off a bumper to the health of each individual, some of whose names were probably introduced for no other purpose. "Well, Gale!" he at length exclaimed, when he had concluded his nephew's eulogy, "I never finished my story—where was I, hey, hick? Told 'ee, how I got made a Baronet, didn't I?"

"Yes, Sir; you had related your marriage, and were saying that Lady Middleton was always becoming a solicitor—"

"Didn't! hate solicitors and lawyers too. Said she was always plaguing and wheedling me to move to Portland Place. Consented at last; more jackass I! never mind; if all fools wore white caps, we should look like a flock of crows. Chaps upon 'Change began to jeer and sneer again—gave me nick-name—never suffered 'em to nick me in a bargain though, hey, Gale!" He again dug his knuckle exultingly into his son's side, and then continued:—"No, no; laugh at me as much as

they like—laugh with 'em—ha ! ha ! —but never let 'em laugh at my expense in money matters. Always took care number one; mind main chance ; made some of them pay for their sniggering ; pluck a feather from every goose, and soon feather your nest—hey ! Well, boy, I never told you of another good spec I made ; and yet it was more interesting to you than all the rest put together. Had but one relation in the world with money—Jem Gale, the soap-boiler, of Mile End ; droll hand ; bachelor himself, yet always preaching up marriage ; close old hunks ; narrow-fisted chap ; no children ; stuck to his skirts,—pleasant walking sometimes in dead men's shoes. Others after the same game ; thought to hook him by going to dine with him, and pretending they liked smell of soap-boiler's yard. Fudge ! Jem wished 'em all at the devil ; hated visitors that came to eat and drink. I knew better ; old fox ; understood trap. Never tasted a mouthful in his house ; sent him a present every month,—hams and yams, a tierce of sugar,

keg of tamarinds, or a jar of preserved ginger, and never asked a favour of him in my life, except that he would stand your godfather ; and that 's the reason you 're called James Gale, though you have dropped the James since the old man's death."

" I have only done so in compliance with the wishes of Lady Middleton ; to myself it was a matter of perfect indifference."

" So is everything else, hey ? had 'ee there, hick ! Well, boy ; Jem Gale made a heavy loss by bad debt ; got sulky ; retired from business ; bought an estate in Sussex ; couldn't live upon the poor, griping, thin, tasteless air of the country, after being so long used to the rich, fat, strengthening atmosphere of soap-lees ; so died in a twelvemonth, and left Brookshaw Lodge and three substantial farms to his godson, an idle young fellow, whom you and I know something about, and whose name is, or ought to be, James Gale Middleton. What 'ee think o' that, boy, hey ?"

" I was aware, of course, that the property

came from my godfather ; but I had not previously learnt how entirely I am indebted for it to your forethought and good management."

" Not indebted to me a bit ; won't tell any lies about the matter ; didn't mean it for you ; kin may be near, but skin's nearer ; no flesh and blood like that in one's own coat ; thought to get it all myself, and more too. No use to you ; not enough to make a gentleman of you ; only serve to keep you idle."

" According to my limited notions, sir, it is a perfect independence ; and though I decline engaging in any pursuit or profession, I am by no means so idle as you seem to imagine. My books and my chemical amusements——"

" Amusements do 'ee call 'em ? Death to you, but sport to us, as the frogs said to the boys. Expect to be burnt in our beds some night or other ; always something whizzing, fizzing, and bouncing in your little labery—what 'ee call it ? Told 'ee set fire to the floor last week ; frightened Meg and Ciss out of their wits. Stink us out o' house sometimes with your experiments ; worse than Jem Gale's

back-yard on boiling days. 'Spose it was this fancy made 'em call 'ee Crazy Middleton at Cambridge, hey? What was it, boy?"

"Indeed, sir, I know not; nor did I ever trouble my head to inquire; but if the life led by my fellow collegians were that of rational beings, then am I proud to be called a madman. I could not make the University a sink of abomination, and a mere mockery of the high and holy purposes for which it was instituted. I could not drink, nor game, nor hunt, nor associate with loose women, nor drive a tandem, nor make a jest of religion, as an excuse for a compulsory observance of its outward forms. To such society I preferred solitude; for such occupations I substituted experimental chemistry, books, and above all, the study of the Bible. In short, sir, I was an unsociable and eccentric being, an enthusiast, a madman. Such may I ever be! O pleasant banks of Cam! O silent and sequestered shades! whither I have so often retired with my pencil and my book, to read, to meditate, and to compose—never, never shall

I forget the delight with which ye filled my bosom, when I escaped from the uncongenial haunts of men whom I could not esteem, and threw myself into those silent solitudes which are ever rendered eloquent, instructive, and endearing, by the voice, the wisdom, and the maternal tenderness, of Nature!"

"Bounce! there 'ee go; up in the clouds again, flying off at a tangent. Meant to have talked to 'ee rationally, 'bout business; but see thee 'st not in the humour for it now; time for all things—mustn't swim against the grain, nor rub against the tide.—Well, Mounseer, what 'ee want, hey?" Dupin, who had entered while his master was speaking, announced that tea was ready: Gale availed himself of the opportunity for making his escape, and the Baronet, who never drank slops of any sort, remained in the dining-room until he had finished his second bottle of port, and looked over all the papers relative to the *Arethusa's* cargo, which had been placed before him by his nephew.

Leaving the son to amuse himself in the

study and little laboratory which he had fitted up at the top of the house, to the great annoyance of Lady Middleton, and to which he seized every opportunity of retreating, even from the society of his own family, we will enter into a few explanations, which may serve to account for his alternations of silent dejection or spleenetic complaint, with bursts of passionate though misplaced enthusiasm, which might otherwise appear somewhat anomalous and contradictory.

Mild and amiable, loving and confiding, Gale Middleton had been sent at an early age to a public school, where his gentle and sanguine spirit had received a shock, which, turning all the sweet currents of his soul into bitterness, and rudely dissipating the bright visions of his boyhood, had injured his mental vision, and occasioned him to view the whole surface of life through a dark and distorted medium. This revulsion, which could have been effected only in a delicate and sensitive mind, had been mainly produced by the atrocious system of *fagging*, as it is termed, or making one boy

a slave to another—a degrading and demoralising practice, disgraceful to every scholastic institution where it is still suffered to prevail. Instead of finding friends and playfellows, as his affectionate heart had anticipated, he encountered only foes and oppressors. His boy-master, punishing the innocent for the guilty, wreaked a revenge upon his young victim for the cruelties that he had himself endured in his servile days; exercising so wanton and capricious a tyranny that it was sometimes impossible to understand his orders, and yet visiting their misapprehension or disobedience with instant and remorseless chastisement. If it be the self-entailed curse of oppression, whatever form it may assume, that it brutalises both the tyrant and his slave, to what chances of vitiation must that youth be exposed who has stood in both these predicaments, at an age when the evil passions are most easily developed, and when the heart receives those impressions which are generally the most indeible?

The misery and maltreatment he had expe-

rienced, which would have hardened a tougher mind into callousness and cruelty, had rendered him melancholy, without injuring his temper or impairing the benevolence of his heart, although, when he turned inwards and sought for support in his own resources, he was stigmatized as shy and unsociable. His father, soon discovering that he was unhappy, removed him from school, and placed him with a tutor who had been recommended to him, giving him for a companion his cousin Caleb Ball, for whose education Sir Matthew had kindly undertaken to provide. Unfortunately for Gale, the tutor thus selected to form and frame his ductile mind, was a rigid, gloomy, fanatical predestinarian, who by impressing upon him the total depravity of mankind, with the exception of the elected few, and the inevitable perdition and torment to which the great mass of human creatures must be eternally condemned, turned even the sweet fountains of religious peace into bitterness and woe, and fostered that morbid dejection which a kinder-hearted man and a sounder Christian would have endeavour-

ed to correct. When Ball was withdrawn from this perilous instructor to be placed in the counting-house, his cousin was sent, at his own request, to Cambridge, where he arrived with a wounded spirit, but not without hopes; for he was too young and too sanguine to despond that in this classic haunt of the muses he might find a more fortunate and congenial sphere.

Bitter was his disappointment when he fully understood the prevailing character of his fellow-students, if that term can be applied to young men who rarely studied. In his colloquy with Sir Matthew, he had truly stated those qualifications which seemed to be most in request among the collegians; to these his own habits, thoughts, feelings, and principles, were diametrically opposed, and he had no resource, no alternative, but the melancholy one of becoming a hermit in the midst of a crowd, by secluding himself in his study, whence he rarely emerged, except to plunge into the solitudes of nature.

An unfortunate combination of circumstances aggravated his distempered views, and strength-

ened the ascetical habits which had been there early superinduced by adventitious causes. A middle-aged gentleman, residing in the immediate vicinity of Cambridge, whose aspirations, like his own, seemed to be dolphin-like, and to "lift themselves above the element they moved in," sought and obtained his friendship, participating with the greatest zest in his long rural rambles, his chemical pursuits, his studies, and his devotional exercises. This person had a niece, a fair and elegant girl, whose countenance, weighed down by an habitual melancholy, little in accordance with her youth and apparent health, possessed, in the eyes of our sympathising student, an indescribable charm that enhanced her beauty. Deeply interested in the fate of one whose mental temperament seemed to be so congenial with his own, he inquired the cause of her deep dejection, and was assured that it was constitutional, since there was nothing in her history or circumstances, her connexions being of the first respectability, that should warrant so complete a prostration of spirits. Animated at the same

moment by curiosity and compassion, the youth became a frequent visitant at the house of his friend, and found the niece, in spite of a certain shyness and reserve, which did but the more pique him to conquer her coldness, an amiable, well-bred, and accomplished girl. Although her hypochondriacal affection, if such it were, underwent at first no change, our young collegian perceived, or imagined, that after a little while she derived an evident pleasure from his attentions and his society, and that her pensiveness was occasionally diminished. Frequent sighs, however, which she in vain endeavoured to suppress, and a woe-stricken air, which, in spite of herself, would steal over and darken her assumed complacency like a passing cloud, sufficiently attested that her mental malady, whatever might be its cause, was rather mitigated than cured.

To Gale Middleton, who, in spite of the yearnings of his heart, had hitherto found no fitting recipient for his affections, so much worth and beauty, rendered ten times more interesting by an accompanying melancholy,

could not appeal in vain. Sympathising deeply with her dejection, and the more so because it appeared to be constitutional, he quickly afforded a new proof that pity, when directed towards a young and attractive female, almost inevitably lapses into love. Far from being displeased when the discovery of this fact was forced upon his conviction, he lent himself eagerly to the new passion with which he was inspired, delighted at the happy prospect of being united to so fair and amiable a girl, and of thus cementing a life-long friendship with her uncle, whose tastes, habits, and pursuits, bore such an affinity to his own. None but lovers can appreciate his delight when he was blushingly told, in answer to his declaration of love, that his passion was fully reciprocated, and when he perceived that the confession had completely cleared from the countenance, and apparently from the heart, of his mistress the gloom with which she had been so long oppressed.

Elated with a happiness more intense than he had ever before experienced, Gale was about

to write to his father to communicate the contract he had formed, and to solicit his sanction for the marriage, when some fatal discovery was made, or some insurmountable objection sprung up, which occasioned the intended match to be suddenly broken off, and the young collegian and his friend to part from each other, not only in anger, but with fierce and mutual menace. The former, with his niece, suddenly left Cambridge, nor was it known whither they had retired; Gale buried himself for a time in his study, plunged into a misgiving gloom, which thenceforward assumed a more dark, settled, and cynical character than it had hitherto exhibited. Over the circumstances that had occasioned this final and violent disruption of the ties he had formed was thrown a veil of the deepest and most impenetrable mystery. From that day forward the names of the parties never passed his lips, and he not only refused to answer any interrogatories upon the subject, but even commanded others, with a sternness foreign to his nature, to refrain from such questions, and to observe the profound

silence which he had prescribed to himself. That inquiries and conjectures could be stifled by this prohibition was hardly to be expected. Curiosity was piqued; rumours of the most contradictory nature were afloat; and we will not conceal the fact, that some of the collegians indulged in surmises which deeply implicated the moral character of Middleton, and fully justified the uncle, according to their version of the story, in refusing him the hand of his niece, and even menacing him—for in their loud altercation a threat of this nature had been overheard—with some signal and avenging chastisement. In defence of the party thus inculpated we are, however, bound to declare that these dark charges, or rather insinuations, when they came to be strictly investigated, could not be made to assume any tangible or definite form. Plausible enough to warrant a blind suspicion, and yet totally unsusceptible of proof, they left the affair involved in the same darkness with which, from the first moment, it had been inscrutably shrouded.

Many an unhappy mind, indignantly strug-

gling with the miserable and base realities that surround it, and panting for some more congenial sphere, has sought refuge in an Atlantis, an Utopia, or a Millennium, where the imagination might spread its seraph wings without contamination or control, and revel in all the beatitudes of a terrestrial paradise, with inhabitants like the dewy roses, which "blush without guilt and weep without a tear." In such day-dreams would Middleton sometimes indulge; but when he contrasted the beauty, order, and completeness, of the physical world with the darkness, defects, and contradictions, of the moral system, he deemed the science of matter so much more consolatory than that of morals and of metaphysics, that he betook himself to experimental philosophy and more especially to chemistry. In this pursuit, he flattered himself with the hope of making some important discovery that might minister to the comfort, safety, and enjoyments, of his fellow-creatures; objects which, in spite of his apparent spleen, ever formed the secret and ardent, though unavowed, aspirations of his soul. His

study was a chaos of philosophical instruments, crucibles, retorts, air-pumps, and magnets, confusedly intermingled with books, papers, lamps, and bottles containing noxious fluids, where-with he would often besmear his hands, his furniture, and his apparatus. Not seldom would a fetid smoke, or a sudden explosion, occasion his neighbours to rush into his chamber, when he would apologise for the alarm he had occasioned, and proceed with great courtesy to explain the process in which he was engaged. Combining these eccentric habits and pursuits with his negligent attire, his recluse life, his lonely wanderings—seldom without a Bible in his hand—his occasional self-accusations, as if he had committed some dark and secret crime, the suspicious mystery of his love-affair, and the enthusiastic, the rapturous apostrophes into which he would sometimes burst when his feelings were aroused by cheering excitements or aspiring hopes, or when he drew a miniature from his bosom, which in his rambles he had more than once been seen to press passionately to his heart, his fellow-

collegians were a good deal puzzled to pronounce upon his real character, or to decide what manner of man they had got among them. One of their number at last suggested that he must be crazy: a solution so satisfactory was instantly and unanimously adopted, and thenceforward the young collegian was known by no other name than that of "Crazy Middleton."

CHAPTER IV.

————— If clear honour
Were purchas'd by the merit of the wearer,
How many then should cover that stand bare!
How many be commanded that command!
How much low peasantry would then be glean'd
From the true seed of honour! how much honour
Pick'd from the chaff and ruin of the times
To be new varnish'd!

SHAKSPEARE.

WE have recorded that, when Sir Matthew expressed his surprise at the frequent visits of Sir Dennis Lifford to Portland Place, his lady had dropped her voice, and had communicated something not meant to be overheard by their daughter Cecilia. As we wish not to have any secrets with the reader, we may divulge the nature of the short colloquy

thus maintained *sotto voce*, so far as the lady was concerned; for the bluff Baronet could hardly subdue his voice to any thing approximating towards a whisper. “*Entre nous*,” began Lady Middleton, with a very significant smile; but before she could proceed any farther, her husband interposed with,—“Fudge! what ‘ee mean by *entre nous*? If you want to *parlez vous*, talk to Dupin: can’t ‘ee speak English?”

“ Between ourselves, then, my dear Sir Matthew,” resumed the wife, “ Sir Dennis’s visits have been so frequent, and his attentions to Cecilia so very marked, that I have little doubt he is smitten by her charms, and means to propose to her.”

“ Charms! don’t know what charms she has; the girl’s well enough; arn’t very handsome myself, to be sure; and her mother, poor soul! was rather fat and fubsy. Seen Ciss look pretty at times, though.”

“ I cannot say I have ever thought her so; but there is no accounting for tastes. Sir Dennis evidently admires her, and if he should

offer his hand, as I fully expect, you may thank me for having procured a match for your daughter a thousand times more advantageous than either she or you could ever have anticipated. I took care to place him next to her at Mrs. O'Grady's supper, after they had waltzed together, and I believe the whole affair may be attributed to my good management on that occasion."

" So, then, she means to discard young Ned Travers, who has been dangling after her these six months, and has walked up so many times to tea, all the way from Broad-street Buildings."

" Don't mention that common-place vulgarian : Cecilia gave him his dismissal long since, though he will continue to persecute her with his unwelcome attentions."

" Tell 'ee what : Ned Travers is a good fellow, and a very rising young man. Capital judge of hemp and flax—soon be the very first broker on Russia walk. What 'ee think o' that, hey ?"

" His hempen talents I will not question ;

but you will hardly put him in competition, even for a single moment, with Sir Dennis Liford, who is not only the most elegant and fashionable young man I ever saw, and the possessor of handsome estates in Donegal, but in the direct line of succession to the Earldom of Ballycoreen, if the present owner of the title should have no children."

" Hey, what — Ciss a Countess? Fegs! won't tell any lies about the matter — *should* like to see that. But does the girl like the chap?"

" My dear Sir Matthew, what a question! Is there any girl that would *not* like such a man, with a title and a good estate?"

" Well, well, only ask'd; said yourself there was no accounting for tastes; every Jill has his Joe. Ciss a Countess!—hick, hick, hick!"

The conversation was broken off by the announcement of dinner, a summons which always operated with a magical effect upon Sir Matthew; but the idea of his daughter's elevation to the peerage must have been complacently entertained in his mind, for not only did it

recur to him more than once, even as he was turning over the papers of the *Arethusa's* cargo, but, in the evening's nap, which generally followed the completion of the second bottle, he dreamt that he saw her going to court with a countess's coronet on her head, and her train held up by Ned Travers, attired in a page's garment of undressed hemp, and wearing a flowing periwig of flax !

On the following afternoon, Sir Dennis's cahriolet, emblazoned with flaunting arms upon the panels and harness, drove up to Portland-place, and the young Irishman, who, though he was as strong and vigorous as a buffalo, affected an ultra-fashionable lassitude and languor, crawled up the stairs by the help of the banister, and threw himself at full length upon one of the drawing-room couches. Evident as it was that he meant to assume all the airs and graces of an exquisite, it was by no means so clear to others, as it seemed to have been to Lady Middleton, that he had succeeded in his object, and that his appearance stamped him at once a perfect gentleman and a finished man of

fashion. A more critical and experienced eye would have decided that his personal appointments, like the decorations of his vehicle, were somewhat too tawdry and ostentatious—a mistake, however, which his countrymen are so apt to commit, that it rather impeached the national taste than that of the individual. His plaited *jabot* was studded with large amethysts; a ponderous wrought-gold chain hanging round his neck secured a diminutive flat French watch inserted into the pocket of his embroidered waistcoat; expensive rings glittered upon his fingers, and his black satin neckcloth was studiously arranged according to the latest and the best authorities. But his fine head of hair seemed to have engaged his most elaborate attention. Saturated with odiferous unguents, and arranged with the most consummate care, he was perpetually twiddling his curls or adjusting his umbrageous whiskers before the mirror, for which purpose he carried a tiny mother-of-pearl comb, which he flourished with a graceful and a jaunty air. In speaking, he assumed the fashionable drawl,

occasionally dropping a letter when its pronunciation was attended with any difficulty—an affectation that assorted but ill with his Irish brogue, of which he could not divest himself.

"Thirty-two stone steps, is it, or thirty-four," asked Sir Dennis, "that I have had to mount? 'Pon my honour, Lady Middleton, I wonder I survive it! Indeed, then, it would take the breath out of Phil. O'Brien, that ran round the whole currah of Kildare without stopping. Really, now, I believe I must leave off visiting, unless where the drawing-room is upon the ground-floor."

"Then your visiting-list, Sir Dennis, will be very circumscribed; for whatever may be the case in Donegal, houses are never built upon that plan in London."

"Why then they should pull them all down; for London, as it is, must be pronounced abawminable—an *uncawmon* bore—quite intolerable! Paying morning visits is an absolute drudgery; one only wants the hod upon one's shoulder to be like a bricklayer's labourer, who passes the whole day in going up

and down a ladder. Another month will certainly be the death of me."

"And yet you look so strong."

"Ah now, my dear Lady Middleton, don't talk of it—you musn't believe a syllable of what you see in my face—it's all imposition; I have no more stamina than a butterfly. Give you my honour, I could eat nothing all day yesterday but a Savoy cake, which I forced down, with the assistance of a bottle of soda-water and a glass of Roman punch."

"And yet you can have hardly been long enough in London to be thus debilitated by its gaieties."

"Oh, then, don't call them gaieties!—sure, they are the greatest nuisance ever was. Night after night don't you see the same faces, and ~~dance~~ the same dances, and hear the same music, and talk the same nonsense, and eat the same sort of jelly and ices? Really, now, it's a ~~nuisance~~ nuisance! very extr'or'ny that people can't strike out something new!"

"Walking always the same nonsense must be ~~very~~ ~~one~~ ~~thing~~: at all events, you may get

new partners ; and that reminds me that you have never inquired after Cecilia, with whom you danced at Mrs. O'Grady's."

" Is it Miss Middleton ye spoke of ? Faith, then, I came on purpose to see her, but I quite entirely forgot all about it ! Och, such a head ! But it certainly is uncawmonly troublesome to remember things. Don't you find it so ? Now you mention it, Lady Middleton, I do recollect that I waltzed with her two nights ago. Ah now, pawsitively it 's the last thing of the kind I shall ever do. Enough to kill an ox ! A quadrille one can saunter through and survive, but a waltz !—Heigho !—you 'll excuse my gaping —these shocking late hours ! What was I talking of, Lady Middleton ?"

" Of Cecilia ; have you so soon forgotten her ?"

" Ah now, what a question ! Sure I 'm never thinking of any thing else. Isn't it on purpose to enquire how she is that I am come ? Shan't we see her soon ? Wouldn't she be dressed yet ? Indeed now, Lady Middleton, that 's an ilegant head-dress of yours. Ah !

it's mighty nate, only the curls on the left side
are a thought too heavy."

" Likely enough, Sir Dennis, for my maid is
a very indifferent *coiffeuse*."

" And my fellow's a most detestable wretch,"
said the Baronet, turning towards a glass, and
adjusting his hair with the assistance of his
fairy comb. " Sends me out with stone-curls,
like Sir Clodesley Shovel in Westminster-
abbey. Ah, Miss Middleton ! I can see by
the glass that ye have entered the room ; but
ye'll excuse my becoming visible till I have
made myself look like a Christian."

" It's well I am in no hurry," said Cecilia,
affecting indifference, but seating herself never-
theless in the chair that was nearest to him,
and assuming one of her most becoming
looks.

" 'Pon my honour, that's very severe of
you," drawled the Baronet, resuming his re-
cumbent posture, and taking a leisurely sur-
vey of her with his eye-glass. " Never saw
you better dressed in my life. Faith ! it's
mighty elegant that *canezou*, and your hair is

beautifully braided. It's rael tortoiseshell, isn't it?—the comb, I mean."

"In anybody else now," thought Lady Middleton, "this lounging manner and free and easy talk, to say nothing of his occasional yawning, might be deemed impolite; but Sir Dennis carries off every thing with such a perfect *nonchalance*, while his appearance is so stylish and *distingué*, that it is quite impossible to criticise any thing he says or does. It is all the very supreme of fashion and *bon ton*. It must be confessed that he is altogether an elegant creature."

Like a prudent mother, Lady Middleton retired to the farthest window, pretending to be deeply engaged by something in the street, but in reality wishing to leave the young folks to an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête*; for the better attainment of which object, and yet to preserve appearances, she had desired Gale to be summoned into the drawing-room, that she might talk with him apart, and had whispered Dupin to deny her to all visitors while Sir Dennis remained in the house. It was not

until after a second and urgent message that her son made his appearance, hurrying into the room in old slippers and a dishabille so grotesque, that Cecilia, accustomed as she was to his freaks in point of dress, could not refrain from laughing outright. The fustian jacket which he always wore when making his chymical experiments, was covered with stains and burns, his trowsers were in no better plight, both his hands were dyed by some bluish mixture in which he had been dabbling, his hair was disordered, and his whole countenance was flushed from the effects of the furnace over which he had been hanging.

"Is it a human creature?" whispered Sir Dennis, slowly raising his eye-glass, and measuring him from top to toe with a derisive smile. "Pawsitively the most extr'or'ny specimen I ever saw out of the Zoological Gardens. Ah, now! it's really quite distressing to see such a fine head of hair arranged in such a particularly Gothic manner. 'Pon my honour it's a sort of suicide."

"Is this a new drawing-room costume?" asked Lady Middleton, with one of those equivocal smiles that always betrayed her to be offended.

"I was told that you had instant and urgent need of my attendance, and I hastened to you accordingly, as soon as I had emptied the crucible with which I was engaged."

"That horrid laboratory? I expect you will blow up the house some day or other."

"Most likely he will make the attempt on the fifth of November," whispered Sir Dennis to Cecilia, "for he bears an uncawmon resemblance to Guy Fawkes, don't he now?"

"Oh, Sir Dennis! you are so irresistibly droll," was the tittering reply.

"My summons was not so imperative," resumed Lady Middleton, "as to require your attendance in this disreputable plight, fitter methinks for a journeyman painter than for the son of Sir Matthew Middleton. However, as I have particular occasion to speak with you, I will overlook this strange disguise.

Sir Dennis, we shall be only in the back drawing-room; you will excuse us for a short time."

"Sure you are in your own house, and may do as you like: and won't I have Miss Cecilia in the mean time to amuse me?"

"Nay, that is more than I can promise," said the young lady coquettishly.

"At all events, you are sure of being amused," resumed Lady Middleton.

"Ah now, it's very good of you to say so," cried the Baronet.

Retreating into a little *boudoir* beyond the back drawing-room, Lady Middleton proceeded to lecture her companion very seriously, always, however, wearing a bland and courteous smile, upon his gross inattention to his personal appearance, impressing upon him the great importance of making his dress conformable to his rank and station, and imploring him to take Sir Dennis Lifford for his model, whom she again eulogised as the very pink of fashion and elegance.

"Then, I thank Heaven," exclaimed the son,

"that I am a vulgarian, and an alien to all the modes and manners of polite life. Why should you wish to metamorphose a sloven into a *petit-maître*, a Diogenes into an Adonis?—or why should I vainly attempt to contravene my nature? Fate or circumstances have made Sir Dennis a fop; me they have made——"

"What, my dear Gale?"

There was a pause of some seconds; the youth smiled, but it was in bitter spirit, and then ejaculated, with an emphatic voice and melancholy look—"Crazy Middleton!"

"Hush, Gale, hush! let me never hear that word again. You should be the last to recall a foolish nickname, which might serve for a joke at college, but which may be of serious injury both to you and your family, should it attach to you in after-life. To return to Sir Dennis, you cannot surely deny that he is a perfect gentleman?"

"I am not sufficiently acquainted with him to decide, but I do know that many wear the external semblance of gentlemen whose inward spirit possesses not a single claim to the title;

even as there are many gentlemanly minds of the highest and purest order beneath clothes of vulgar fashion and coarse quality, or even of ‘loop’d and window’d raggedness.’ To constitute a perfect gentleman, the best attributes of the head and heart must be combined. He who would indeed deserve that proud epithet must be devout, courteous, and accomplished, gentle, generous, and brave; pure in word and deed, disinterested, philanthropic, and, above all, incessant and intrepid in charitably succouring the weak, the lowly, and the poor. One of our old poets, sensible of the rare conjunction of attributes required for this exalted character, hesitated not to affirm, with a pious fervour almost pushed to profanation, that our Saviour was ‘the first true gentleman that ever lived.’”

“Without flattery, Gale, I believe you to possess many of the internal requisites you have mentioned, and I should be the more delighted to see you make some approximation towards those exterior recommendations and *bienseances de la société*, which nobody can vio-

late without being thought rude and vulgar. At the present moment I am particularly anxious that you should assume a more appropriate and fashionable appearance, because I am about to have a grand musical *soirée*, which will be honoured with the attendance of the Duchess of Harrowgate and her friends, and as this will be your debut before the *beau monde* and the *haut ton*, I am naturally anxious that you should make it as successfully as possible. You will be delighted with the party on other accounts than the high rank of my visitants; for I know that you doat upon music, though there are so few things in which you take pleasure."

" Yes, Madam, I value it as an exquisite gratification, the more precious because it is scarcely susceptible of corruption or abuse, unless when the performer, seeking to conquer difficulties rather than to excite pleasant emotions, thinks more of himself than of others, and astonishes without delighting his auditors. From the moment that he is led astray by this pitiful ambition his art degenerates, even while

it seems to attain its highest practical perfection. Performances merely instrumental seldom touch my feelings; to prefer them to vocal melody, sweetening the sweetest inspirations of the muse, is to exalt the inanimate organ above its living inspirer. What instrument is comparable to the human voice divine? Noble and delicious is music when, by being married to immortal verse, it acquires a soul, and is elevated from a sensual to an intellectual pleasure. Nobler, and more hallowed still, when it hymns the praises of its great First Cause; and while it wraps us in an earthly elysium of dulcet sound, wafts the ecstatic spirit heavenwards, until it thrills to the choral song of angels and the harmonious chiming of the spheres."

"Very fine, my dear Gale, and I dare say all very true, but not particularly germane to the matter. I entreat you to betake yourself to a fashionable tailor, and you answer me by a high-flown extravaganza about the songs of angels and the music of the spheres. To what church-organ have you been listening;

from what charity boys have you drawn your inspiration?"

"From none, from none! Never without shame and regret have I heard those ill-taught urchins desecrating by their dissonant yells the sweet and majestic psalms of David. We ransack the whole world for exquisite singers, and blindly throw our treasures at their feet, that they may warble licentious love-songs upon an opera-stage; while we leave the praises of the Deity and the noble songs of David to be droned by nasal clerks, or screeched by vociferous brats. The opera is our real religion, and the church is only the theatre where we act it. Oh! how differently were the divine hymns chanted, when Solyma was indeed the chosen city of the Lord, and David reigned in Israel!"

"That was a species of sacred opera," said Lady Middleton, smiling—"of which, in the present times, we can scarcely form an idea."

"What, Madam! have you not often, while studying the Bible, been stolen from yourself, and rapt away, away, away, in a glorious day-

dream, to the times of David and to the city of the Lord? *I have—I have!* methinks I see it now! Lo! yonder is the God-hallowed temple, solemn, massive, and gigantic. I see the high-priest, gorgeous in pontifical robes, with the awful name of Jehovah inscribed upon his forehead. I behold the Levites in their silken stoles; mine ears are filled with the choral music of the players upon the harp, clarion, and hautboy, the shawm and the dulcimer, the cythern and the sackbut; the female dancers, with their tambourines and bells, are moving gracefully along the great court of the temple, in a joyous yet majestic measure; the fumes of incense from the Holy of Holies are redolent around me; and hark! how the valley of Jehoshaphat rings to the glad music, as the silver trumpets send forth a shivering sound, and the cymbals clash, and the assembled multitude shout in chorus—Hosanna to the Lord!"

Though Lady Middleton had more than once seen her son burst out into similar rhapsodies, his accents and gestures were now so impas-

sioned, and his looks so wild, that she was not entirely free from alarm, as she backed her chair somewhat nearer to the door. Deeming it better, however, to assume a bantering tone, she exclaimed, "Upon my word, Gale, you have treated me to an excellent *scena*; you would have formed an admirable ballet-master to King Solomon; and I only regret that your present rehearsal has been *à-propos* to nothing. If you have quite done with the songs of angels, the music of the spheres, and the silken stoles of the Levites, we will return, with your permission, to the subject of your own personal appointments and appearance."

"Have you nothing further to communicate than what I have already heard?"

"Only to express my hope that you will accede to my declared wishes, and that, when next you honour me with a colloquy, you will neither present yourself in the costume of a scene-shifter, nor apostrophise the clouds, the spheres, and Jerusalem, instead of attending to my observations."

"I must not suffer my furnace to go out,

nor my crucible to cool," said Gale, bowing as he hastened from the room.

" If that young man be not crazy already, he will be so soon," exclaimed Lady Middleton. " *Raison de plus* for marrying Cecilia as quickly as we can, for a lunatic brother may frighten away many who would otherwise become claimants for her hand. I hope, however, that we have hooked the baronet."

Lady Middleton remained sometime longer in the *boudoir*, pretending to busy herself with the flowers, until, upon observing that her visitant had risen from the sofa, and was sauntering towards the window, she tripped lightly into the front drawing-room, exclaiming:—

" A thousand excuses, Sir Dennis, for leaving you so long; but I have been so deeply engaged with Gale that I could not sooner make my escape."

" Ah now, Lady Middleton, don't say a word about it. 'Pon my honour I never noticed it. I was going to do something. I could not have got up else, for its a mons'ous

bore rising and walking, but pawsitively I forget what it was."

" You were going to show me your new cabriolet horse," said Cecilia.

" Faith, and so I was ! What a memory you have ! Here, you may see him better from this window. He cost me a hundred guineas last week, and I give you my honour he hasn't a single pace in him. It's a mere robbery."

" Did you not try before you purchased him ?" enquired Lady Middleton.

" Is it I that would take the trouble ? Sure it would be worth all the money. No : I left it to my precious fellow yonder in the white gloves, and he has cheated me, as he does every day of his life."

" Then why do you not get rid of him ?" asked Cecilia.

" And where would I get a better ? Sure they 're all alike ; all rogues and thieves."

" But too true !" cried Lady Middleton, who, as she carried on a sort of servile war with her domestics, and was constantly changing

them, always jumped at an opportunity of throwing upon them the blame of her own penuriousness and oppression, and of stigmatising the whole class as a set of idle ingrates, whom no treatment however kind could conciliate or reclaim. This was one of the very few subjects upon which she forgot her habitual politeness, often wearying her auditors with a grievous detail of the favours she had heaped upon servants, and of the ill-returns she had invariably experienced.

"My dear Lady Middleton," said the baronet, interrupting a tiresome catalogue of this nature, "nothing on earth so easy as to prevent all this. Ah now, if you would just submit quietly, as I do, to be robbed every year to the amount of three or four hundred pounds, you would find it a mon'sous pleasant thing. The trouble of preventing this would be honestly worth a thousand a year to me, so that I consider myself a gainer of six hundred pounds per annum. 'Pon my honour I do! Ah, there's Lord Arthur Fintown. I must

overtake him to know what time he dines to-night. Really, now, it's uncawmonly troublesome to remember things."

" So it seems by his forgetting to wish us good morning," said Lady Middleton, as her visitant sauntered out of the room. " Well, my dear, did you settle with him about going to the Colosseum to-morrow ?"

" Oh yes, it is all arranged. He is to call here in his cab at two o'clock, and I promised to carry him to the Park in our carriage, for he says he never walks."

" Good, good ! Remember to wear your bonnet with the pink lining, which is more becoming to you than any other. Nothing can be better than the Colosseum ; there's the Swiss Cottage, and the Grotto, and the Marine Caves, and the Conservatory, some of which are always unoccupied, and are delightful places for a flirting *tête-à-tête*. I must engage some discreet person to go with us. Who shall it be ?"

" Would Mrs. O'Grady — ?"

"Heavens, child ! how could you dream of such a thing ? She would give you the *congé*, and engross him all to herself."

"Perhaps Lady Bishopstown would accompany us."

"Worse and worse : she has a marriageable daughter of her own. Do mention some other and more appropriate name."

"What think you of my brother ?"

"Gale ? Ridiculous ! He would either present himself in the costume of Abel Drugger's apprentice, or, if sane in his attire, he would be crazy in his demeanour, and draw upon us the attention of the company, which I wish particularly to avoid, by mouthing and ranting some of his moon-struck heroics. Can you suggest no better companion ?"

At this moment the door was thrown open, and Dupin announced Mrs. Burroughs.

"What a singular coincidence !" whispered Lady Middleton. "The very person whom I was about to propose."

CHAPTER V.

“Indeed, Sir, there are cozeners abroad, and therefore it behoves men to be wary.”—SHAKSPEARE.

“O you Gods! think I, what need we have any friends if we should never have need of ‘em?—We are born to do benefits, and what better or properer can we call our own, than the riches of our friends?”—*Ibid.*

MRS. BURROUGHS was a prying, inquisitive, bustling busybody, who not only possessed the talent of raising contributions upon society for the support of herself and her family, but had the consummate skill to conceal her operations so effectually from the world, and to a certain extent even from herself, that she was everywhere received on a footing of perfect equality, and contrived, by a little blinking of the question, not to forfeit her own feelings of personal independence. Her husband, who practised as

an attorney in a fashionable quarter of the town, was, as well as herself, of Irish extraction. Although only very distantly related to one nobleman of the sister island, the lady contrived, by twisting and twirling the branches of her genealogical tree, to claim some sort of connection with half the peerage; an averment which, being taken upon trust, and supported by a handsome face and figure, plausible manners, and a fashionable appearance, making some little abatement for the Hibernian tendency towards flauntiness and over-finery, had enabled her, without much exertion, to push herself into a pretty extensive circle of polite acquaintance. By means of her husband, who was connected with an Alderman, she had insinuated herself as a visitant into a good many of the civic families: while by frequenting religious and charitable meetings, enrolling herself a member of Bible, tract, missionary, slave-abolition, and other societies, and acting as committee-woman, auditress, or treasurer, to some of these institutions, she procured a *passe-partout*, which has been known to carry

many a damaged reputation into good and general society, and which, in the case of Mrs. Burroughs, whose character was really without blemish, opened an incredible number of houses to her visits, and gave her an acquaintance more or less intimate with people of all classes, quarters, and denominations.

Knowledge of all sorts, even of persons, is power. Sensible of this truth, she felt a philanthropic wish to apply the influence of which she had possessed herself to the benefit of the community. It was natural, therefore, that she should recommend her friends to betake themselves to her good man, whose long head and short bills formed the constant theme of her eulogy. An economical zeal for the interests of the religious societies over which she had any control often prompted her to resist the payment of just demands, and to involve them in litigation ; when the same praiseworthy principle dictated the employment of Dominick (such was the name of her husband,) who, in spite of his alleged cheapness, contrived to turn the pettiest squabble or involvement of

this nature to good and profitable account, and by his specious manners to extend considerably the list of his clients.

But Mrs. Burroughs condescended to bestow much more trifling benefits and favours upon her acquaintance : nothing was too minute for her friendly and vigilant solicitude. A sort of universal agent, broker, and factotum, she negotiated as a match-maker ; found tutors and governesses, masters and teachers for the elder children, and proper schools for the younger ; recommended tradespeople of all descriptions ;

independence, that they rather established it, for she generally reciprocated these flattering testimonials of friendship by donations of card-racks, match-boxes, pincushions, or some little paste board trifle, fashioned by her own industrious hands. If the institutions that she patronised chose, upon an understanding of mutual secrecy, to take her children at half-price ; if the confectioner whom she recommended supplied her suppers, when she had a party, upon the same saving footing ; or if other tradespeople were glad to make a similar arrangement, why should she attempt to repress so natural and laudable a gratitude, of which, as she herself often pathetically lamented, there was but too little in this selfish world. Besides, bargaining was not disreputable : was it not a duty that she owed to her husband and children to get every thing upon as cheap conditions as she could ? Unquestionably it was, and a duty was too sacred a thing to be trifled with.

" My dear Lady Middleton," cried the person we have been describing, as she bustled into the drawing-room, " delighted to see you ;

... look so divinely: what a cap! How do, dear?" nodding fair Miss Middleton—"what a pretty, gaying dress, but *that* you always have Sir Dennis's cab waiting, so I would trop, as I fear I was yesterday, but Duke Street, on my friend Mrs. French. It was about luncheon-time she had a party yesterday, and it is charity to assist in demolishing the fi which would otherwise be completel Besides, she gave me all these French for the children. My young folks qu upon sweetmeats of all sorts."

Of this fact Mrs. Burroughs took go to apprise her friends, and, under the n and amiable pretext of catering for her fry, she collected more than enough to i

cealed basket, separated into three divisions. Diving into one of these, under the pretence of selecting a curious *bonbon* to offer to Cecilia, she suddenly exclaimed, "What have we here? Well, I protest I had almost forgotten what I came about. You were saying yesterday, dear Lady Middleton, that you wanted some more ornaments for the mantelshelf of your little boudoir, and I have therefore brought you two hyacinth-stands of my own manufacture. They are scarcely worth your acceptance, but as I have emblazoned on them your arms and cypher, I thought you might like to have them, and, being a very curious coincidence, I completed them just as I finished the last of that delicious tea you were so good as to give me some time ago."

"Is it all gone? I have a quarter chest of the same quality for which I have no immediate need, and if you will allow me, I will desire Dupin to have it taken to your house."

"O my dear Lady Middleton! you are too good; I could not think of robbing you, but as you have no immediate need of it, and Do-

minick is so fond of that particular quality, and we can't get it any where else, I will avail myself of your friendly offer. *A-propos* to Du-pin, do you continue to like him as a *maitre d'hôtel*?"

Lady Middleton and her daughter both sang the praises of their favourite domestic, and their visitant, who was a persevering talker, resumed the thread of her tittle-tattle. "I am so glad I recommended him to you. I was sure he would suit. Such a character I got of him! quite a treasure! Servants are such a torment, that a really good one cannot be valued too highly. Well, my dear Lady Middleton! I was all impatience till I was let in; for I came on purpose to congratulate you."—The speaker looked significantly at her friend, and paused.

"To congratulate me! upon what? *Je n'y suis pas.*"

"Nay, now, don't put on that look of wonder, though it really becomes you, and so indeed does every look. I did not think you would have any concealments from me, but I

have discovered your secret, since you did not think proper to make a confidante of me."

"I am a bad OEdipus, and seldom attempt to solve enigmas."

"Well, then, I will put you out of your misery, by telling you that I have learnt the whole arrangement you have made with the Duchess of Harrowgate, through Lady Barbara Rusport."

"I am fully aware of your abilities in fathoming the affairs of your acquaintance, though I can hardly guess how you have so quickly come to the knowledge of this little negotiation, which was only concluded yesterday afternoon."

"Oh! that's a secret of mine, and one which I mean to keep too, in order that it may serve me again, as well as it has done now; so you see what a spy I shall have in your camp, if you ever declare war against me. Ha! ha! ha! Seriously though, I congratulate you most cordially on this *coup d'etat*, which will establish you in the very first circles of fashion.

I am aware that the day is not yet fixed; I shall know it, I dare say, as soon as you do; but is it not fortunate that I have just had a most curious figured French silk dress given me by my kind friend Mrs. O'Gorman French, which may make its *début* upon the occasion. It is quite *unique*."

"I have nothing to do with the parties to be invited," said Lady Middleton, not sorry to mortify her prying and officious friend. "The Duchess makes out the list, and I fear you are not of her acquaintance."

"We have never been formally introduced; but she must know who I am. She has seen me at Lady Selina Silverthorpe's, and, by hook or by crook, I am determined to be of your party. It would be strange indeed if I were to be shut out of the house of so old and intimate a friend. You will have an infinity to do, and I shall be most happy to assist you in the preparatory arrangements. I am accustomed to these matters, you know, and, unless you have me at your elbow, you will be liable to be miserably cheated. Shall I engage

the vocal and instrumental performers for you? I know them all, and understand what to pay them. At all events you must positively let me order the supper for you, as I did for Lady Selina. Her's was universally admired, and yet, *entre nous*, and I am sure you will not let it go any farther, it cost comparatively a mere trifle."

As Lady Middleton thought herself quite as good an economist and manager as her friend, and was not without a latent suspicion of her motives, for the mean and the parsimonious easily suspect others of similar pettiness, her offers were civilly declined. A sort of diamond-cut-diamond colloquy ensued; but as Mrs. Burroughs, in spite of all her skirmishing and manœuvring, could not carry her point, she changed the conversation just as it was getting so extremely polite and friendly as to threaten a quarrel, by exclaiming :

" What a thoughtless creature I am ! I quite forgot, though I almost came on purpose, to enquire how the affair goes on with my friend Sir Dennis and a certain fair damsel

who shall be nameless." She dropped her voice as she concluded, and looked significantly towards Cecilia, who, during the courteous sparrings of her companions had been amusing herself with a book. "My dear," said the mother for the purpose of getting her daughter out of the room, "do me the favour to fetch me my smelling-bottle from the little drawer in my dressing-room. I am afraid to trust Horton, for she always steals my lavender-water."

Lady Middleton, who kept the most trifling articles under constant lock, thus suggesting dishonesty to her servants by showing that she thought them capable of it, handed a bunch of keys to her daughter, who had no sooner quitted the apartment than she continued :

"Every thing, my dear Mrs. Burroughs, is proceeding as favourably as we could wish ; and I am glad you have made allusion to the subject, for we have engaged him to go to the Colosseum to-morrow, and as I want some discreet confidential person to take my arm, while Cecilia and Sir Dennis——"

“ I understand perfectly, my dear Lady Middleton, and shall have great pleasure in accompanying you. Fortunate indeed may you and Sir Matthew consider yourselves if this affair comes to a satisfactory conclusion, and certainly every thing looks auspicious at present. As to Miss Middleton, she will be the envy of all the spinsters in London. Lady Gauntley evidently wants to secure Sir Dennis for her scraggy giantess of a daughter; but she angles so palpably, and the bait is so unattractive, that the man must be a gudgeon indeed to nibble at it; nor is Mrs. Curzon Chilvers likely to win him for her pretty-faced lisping simpleton, though she smiles and simpers in his face, and talks nonsense to him by the hour together.”

“ Be not too hard upon her,” said Lady Middleton with a sneering smile, “ for the poor girl must either talk in that way or be silent.”

“ Very good, very good! your wit is always ready at hand. Was it not lucky that I made you acquainted with Sir Dennis. We are in

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CHAPTER VI.

Was ever woman in such fashion wooed ?

Was ever woman in such fashion won ?

SHAKSPEARE.

MRS. BURROUGHS, who was a complete woman of business and always punctual to an appointment, presented herself in good time on the following morning, having put a friend's carriage in requisition for the declared purpose of conveying her to Portland-place, though she had not scrupled to order the driver to several other points, where she had calls to make or commissions to execute, assuring the man that her visits were all in the way and would make no difference whatever. Her capacious reticule, which she never forgot to carry, and,

the carpet with her foot, she walked up and down the drawing-room, casting impatient glances, first at the French clock upon the mantel-shelf and then at the street, where, however, the cabriolet of the impunctual Baronet was not to be seen.

Copious, almost inexhaustible, as was the subject, Lady Middleton and Mrs. Burroughs were nearly weary of discussing the faults of some of their mutual near and dear friends, and had begun to suspect that Sir Dennis had forgotten his appointment, when his cabriolet was heard driving rapidly up to the door, and in a few minutes he dawdled into the drawing-room. "Indeed then, Lady Middleton," he exclaimed, affecting to pant as he sank into a chair, "I cannot speak to you yet awhile, for your long flight of stairs has taken every bit of breath clean out of my body. Och! it's the death of me they'll be one of these days! Ah, my dear Mrs. Burroughs, would I be an Irishman and not glad to see one of my own kith and kin? Miss Middleton, I am your most devoted, as my friend Lord Arthur says.

Sure now, ladies, I ought to apawlogise for being after my time, but it's so uncawmonly difficult to remember the hour, now isn't it? and my lazy fellow never wound up my watch last night. Here it is, you see, just stopping at two."

He took the little French toy from his waistcoat-pocket and showed it to Mrs. Burroughs, who apostrophised it with the most endearing epithets, as a love, a dove, a treasure, and a darling: Lady Middleton, with the bland smile by which she usually expressed displeasure, hoped that Sir Dennis, when next he had an appointment with ladies, would not trust to so inaccurate a watch; and Cecilia, piqued at the impunctuality of her admirer, observed, that as they had lost quite time enough already, and the carriage had been a good while in waiting, they had better set off immediately.

" Faith now!" cried the Baronet, " I am quite entirely of your opinion that it's the most foolish thing in life to lose time, especially when there's a young lady in the case; so

perhaps you 'll be doing me the favour to take my arm."

Lady Middleton, looking significantly at her friend, accompanied her down stairs, the party entered the carriage, and were presently deposited at the door of the Colosseum. Mrs. Burroughs, who rarely visited public places except with orders, did not dream of paying for her admission upon the present occasion, considering herself to be rather conferring than receiving an obligation when she assisted in the important object of securing the baronet for Cecilia ; but it may appear strange that Lady Middleton, living at an expense of several thousands per annum, should designedly hold back, in the hope that Sir Dennis would offer to frank the whole party, and thus save her a few shillings. It was upon these insignificant sums that she more especially exercised her parsimonious finesse ; so true is the observation of Swift, that five pounds a-year would redeem almost any one from the imputation of meanness. Her manœuvre succeeded ; Sir Dennis, cheerfully drawing out his well-stored purse,

claimed the usual male privilege of paying for the ladies, (a vulgarism, by the by, which is, or ought to be exploded, as derogatory to those whom it professes to compliment,) and they passed into the interior of the building.

Dull and obtuse must be the senses and the intellect of that spectator who can fail to be delighted by the grandeur, the beauty, and the variety of the objects successively presented to him at this most interesting exhibition. Sir Dennis indeed complained almost immediately upon his entrance into the statue-gallery that he could not find a mirror ; but this desideratum being presently supplied, he drew out his tiny comb, coaxed his whiskers to his cheek, not forgetting to display his glittering rings in the operation, gave a few finishing touches to his really fine head of hair, and, without replacing his hat, again offered his arm to Cecilia, and sauntered onwards, exclaiming :

“ I hope this gallery’s not very long, walking is such a mons’ous bore, isn’t it ? Oh now, just look at the head of this statue. ‘Pon my honour it’s too ridiculous. That’s what I

complain of in my fellow ; he sends me out with curls like those. I really must discharge the creature. He will never be an artist. But changing is such a trouble. Really these sculptors should not thus expose their ignorance ; they should take a few lessons from some fashionable *coiffeur*."

Cecilia, who like most of our English young ladies, knew very little of statuary and the arts, enquired the names of several of the figures upon which no ticket was affixed ; but her companion was unfortunately as ignorant as herself. Indolently lifting up his eye-glass, he cast a passing glance at the objects of her enquiry, and exclaimed :

" Really now, I haven't the honour of knowing the gentleman. Very sorry, but I never saw the lady before in the whole course of my life, 'pon my honour ! Cannot say I regret it. Most extr'or'nary figures ; not the least style upon earth about them."

Even to Cecilia the remarks of her companion seemed singularly vapid and jejune though his conversation assumed a more in-

teresting character when he declared her to be a much finer figure than any in the room, whether animate or inanimate. Unluckily, however, just as she thought he was becoming more rational and intellectual, because he began to flatter her, they had completed the round of the gallery, and had reached the little circular platform upon which they were to be wound up to the top of the building, in order to see the panorama. Here the baronet was informed that he might walk up if he pleased, instead of being hoisted by machinery.

"Is it by those horrid stairs?" he asked, "that you would have me climb up to the top of this abominable St. Paul's. Ah, now! wouldn't I be dead before I got half-way up? Sure if there was heaven at the top I could never attempt it."

So saying he entered the little circular alcove, his companions followed, and the whole party were safely deposited upon the elevated platform that commands the Panorama.

Sir Dennis was too inert to feel, or too listless and apathetic to express the admiration

and delight which the scene outspread before him was calculated to elicit; the others, even if they had not gazed upon it before, were too fashionably fine to betray any marked sensation, especially of a pleasurable nature, so that little was said for a few minutes, until Lady Middleton, upon changing her position, and perceiving her son, suddenly ejaculated :

" Gale here ! amazement ! You are the last person I should have expected to encounter. I knew not that you took pleasure in exhibitions of any sort."

" Pleasure !" exclaimed the young man, shaking his head with a melancholy look of dissent. " And yet it is a species of pleasure thus to see London without being stunned with its din, suffocated by its fetid smoke, and above all, without being revolted by the noxious portion of its inhabitants. It is like contemplating a portrait, wherein we may trace the form and the lineaments of some hideous monster, while we avoid his roar, his stench, and his ferocity. Or rather may it seem that I am gazing upon the silent and

unsubstantial ghost of a departed metropolis. Oh! what a curiosity were this painted apparition, could it reappear at some future date, not perhaps so distant as we fondly dream, when the mighty city which it represents, like all its commercial predecessors, shall have passed away, and be numbered with the buried majesty of things that are no more,—with Ophir and Tadmor, with Tyre, Sidon and Carthage: when St. Paul's, dwindled to a few upstanding columns amid a wilderness of prostrate ruins, shall echo no vespers but those of the hooting owl and the screaming bat; when yonder lapsing Thames, for ever flowing away, and yet the only feature of the scene destined to remain, supporting no vessels upon its deserted waves, and reflecting no stately edifices on its banks, shall wind through an uninhabited and swampy waste; whose silence shall be only broken by the bark of the lurking fox, or the mournful cry of the bittern."

"*Allons!*" whispered Lady Middleton to her companion. "*Cette tirade m'ennuie.* We did not come hither to listen to these rhaps-

dies. Let us make our escape, for Gale has no more tact than an infant, and if he attaches himself to our party he will prove a perfect Marplot."

"Now then is our time," said Mrs. Burroughs, "for he seems plunged in so profound a reverie that we may reach the bottom of the building before he comes to himself."

Nodding a silent assent, Lady Middleton made a signal to her daughter, and the party, descending the stairs, passed through the conservatory towards the Swiss cottage, till they

reticule a whole cargo of edibles, for which the baronet paid, and they proceeded to the cottage. Sir Dennis, apparently exhausted with fatigue, threw himself into a chair; Cecilia seated herself beside him; there were no other visitants in the room, and the opportunity as well as the scene, with its little lake, its fir-crowned rocks, babbling waterfalls, and cooing doves, seemed to be so expressly adapted to a declaration of love, that Lady Middleton, taking her companion's arm, sauntered back towards the conservatory, under pretext of examining some of the rare plants.

Cecilia had been instructed by her prudent mother that, as her admirer seemed to be a sluggish indecisive person, who, if permitted, would probably degenerate into a mere dangler, it might be expedient to quicken his resolves by a timely hint, or even to pique his jealousy by an allusion to Ned Travers, her civic suitor. Willing as the daughter was to avail herself of these hints, and sensible that she could hardly expect a better opportunity than the present, she scarcely knew how to administer the pre-

scribed stimulants, since her companion talked of nothing for some time but the ducks in the little lake, and the owl upon the rocks. Collecting, however, her ideas and her courage at the same moment, she ventured to exclaim :

" Certainly this is a most sweet and picturesque scene, and if I were at all romantic, I should say it is precisely the sort of place for making love."

" Ah now, that's very extro'r'nyary," cried the Baronet. " I give you my honour I was just thinking of the self-same thing." He sate upright instead of lolling, drew his chair nearer, and assuming a more earnest manner than was his wont, thus proceeded : " Indeed then, Miss Middleton, I have long been wishing for an opportunity of speaking to you upon this subject, which lies upon my heart, it does, and of telling you that though I never meant to marry for some years to come, for sure if I did, wouldn't there be wives enough to be got in Ireland ; yet since I came to London I have been induced to change my mind, and to come quite entirely to a different conclusion. In-

duced, did I say ? Compelled would be the better word, for truly, now, it was no wish of mine ; only when a man's day is come, and he falls in love in spite of himself, there's no use in life fighting with the fates, or squaring your elbows for a set-to with Cupid. And this being the case, Miss Middleton, I hope you'll forgive me if I declare——” Here he suddenly broke off, and pointing to the water, whence a flapping and a splashing sound proceeded, exclaimed : “ Och, now ! lookye there, two of the ducks are fighting. Sure the big one is trying to hold the other under the water. Oh the spite of that murderous creature ! ” He continued watching the struggle till the weaker combatant made its escape, and waddled up the bank, while the victor struck across the lake quacking and wagging his tail in triumph, when the spectator of the battle, resuming the seat from which he had started, said with a bewildered look. “ Indeed, then, I hardly remember. Can you tell me what I was talking about, Miss Middleton ? ”

Cecilia, whose curiosity had been wound up

to the highest pitch of expectation, and who felt the offensiveness of this most inopportune absence of mind, was too much piqued to make any immediate reply. Recollecting, however, her mother's salutary counsel about exciting, if possible, the jealousy of her indecisive admirer, she said with an air of indifference, "Really, Sir Dennis, I cannot undertake to collect for you your wandering thoughts, but I can tell you my own if you wish to hear them. I was just then recalling, that the last time I visited the Colosseum, it was in company with Mr. Travers, a gentleman whom I believe you have once seen in Portland Place. He professes himself my admirer, and Sir Matthew, who has a great regard for him, is very anxious ——."

"Ah now, my dear Miss Middleton!" interposed the Baronet—"let me beseech you not to bestow a thought upon the creature. I was about to declare that it was yourself, your own sweet self that had made me change my resolution: you have quite entirely won my heart. I never did, and never will, love anybody but

yourself, and I'll never rise up from the ground, unless you allow me to hope that this dear hand may soon become mine for life." Sinking upon one knee as he spoke, he threw himself into a theatrical attitude, seized her hand, pressed it to his heart, and endeavoured to look as tender as his unmeaning bewhiskered face would allow.

"Pray, pray rise up!" cried Cecilia, in great agitation—"I must refer you to my father."

"But, if Sir Matthew has no objection, and sure I hope he won't, may I flatter myself that you will confirm my happiness?"

"In that case I should not withhold my consent," blushed Cecilia.

"Oh then, my dear Miss Middleton! ten thousand thanks for that same confession. I give you my honour you have made me the happiest creature in the world."

At this moment footsteps were heard approaching, Sir Dennis started upon his feet, strangers entered the room, he offered his arm to Cecilia, and they rejoined their friends, who had been all this time busily idle in the con-

servatory. Lady Middleton drew a favourable augury from the excited looks of her daughter, which rarely betrayed any emotion; but nothing was said confirmatory of her hopes until they reached the portico, when Sir Dennis, just as he was stepping into his cabriolet, told her that he should call next morning, before Sir Matthew went into the city, as he wished to see him on particular business. No sooner were the ladies seated in their carriage, than the impatient mother, reminding her daughter that they need not have any secrets before friends, asked her whether she could explain the cause of Sir Dennis's promised visit at so unusual an hour. This drew forth a hasty account of what had occurred, and all was instantly mutual congratulation, and shaking of hands, and "nods and becks, and wreathed smiles," in the midst of which Mrs. Burroughs forgot not to observe that, as she had been the means of their securing such a prize, by first introducing Sir Dennis to their house, she took it for granted Dominick would be employed to draw up the settlements, and marriage-articles,

and all that sort of thing, with which matters he was particularly conversant. To a request so reasonable a willing assent was given. They were now in Portland Place. Lady Middleton and her daughter alighted at their own door, and Mrs. Burroughs, recollecting that she had a visit to make two or three streets off, requested the use of the carriage for that purpose. This application being as readily granted as its predecessor, she ordered the driver to Gloucester Place, then to two or three other streets, and finally to her own house, when she gave the children one cake apiece out of her heavily-laden reticule, and deposited the remainder in a private store which she kept for furnishing forth her desserts, whenever any friends likely to become clients were invited to dine with her.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Kill men i’ th’ dark ! Where be these bloody thieves ?
———Ho ! murder ! murder ! ”

SHAKSPEARE.

“ SWEET are the uses of adversity,” saith the bard, who, with a not less acute and redeeming insight into human nature, proclaims that there is “a soul of goodness in things evil.” By constantly basking in the sunshine of prosperity, the heart may indeed look bright and glittering, but it is apt to become hard, dry, and sterile. The cloud that passes over it refreshes while it darkens : tears are the genial showers that soften and intenerate it, fertilising the latent seeds of goodness until they shoot forth and expand into blossom and precious fruit. By a beautiful provision of our nature, they who are under affliction of

any sort generally betake themselves for solace to the exercise of the virtues, and more especially of that charity which “blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.” Thus are the unhappy in mind and the needy in circumstance relieved at the same moment; and thus do we realise the quaint saying, that crosses are ladders that lead to heaven.

Although Gale Middleton, baffled by the inscrutable and irreconcileable discrepancies of the moral world, had abandoned the unprofitable study of metaphysics and betaken himself to the investigation of matter, he had not by any means shrunk from the performance of the social duties enjoined not less by the suggestions of his own heart than by his sincere religious convictions. Many circumstances had combined to make him unhappy, but his natural temperament disposed him to be sanguine and cheerful rather than despondent. He had not, like most young men, those absorbing excitements of business, ambition, and active life, which give them such a decided advantage over the disappointed female, and enable them

to forget so much more quickly as well as certainly the defeat of their only hopes. Gale had no stirring pursuits, none at least that would assist him to wear off his chagrin by the collision of society : for his chemical experiments were made in his lonesome study ; his walks were solitary ; he kept as much as possible apart from the crowd, feeding his melancholy by chewing the cud of bitter fancies, and brooding over the blight that had withered his affections upon his first going to school, and subsequently, as well as more distressingly, during his residence at Cambridge.

But while he shrank, with a morbid distaste, from intercourse with a class whose habits, modes, and thoughts, were so little in accordance with his own, his heart, yearning at the same moment for some relief from solitude as well as from the burthen of its sorrows, found both in seeking out the habitations of the poor, the lowly, and the afflicted, and administering to them the consolations of charity. Here was a species of companionship, which, leaving him in the enjoyment of the independence he loved,

might be recurred to at any hour when loneliness became irksome. Here was a solace in which he could indulge, without reproach and without contamination, whenever the habitual dejection of his spirit was weighed down to an almost insupportable heaviness. His means, though limited—and it was only upon such occasions that he wished them to be more commensurate with his benevolent desires—enabled him to carry comfort into many a distressed family; and he would often restrict himself in the purchase of books or philosophical apparatus, that he might extend the sphere of his charities. But the benefit that he derived from conferring benefits was not altogether unalloyed. Brought into almost daily collision with penury, wretchedness, and disease, not seldom entailed upon the sufferers by their own misconduct or guilt, he was confirmed in the belief that human life was destined to be a perpetual struggle with sufferings and woe; his peculiar religious notions drove him to the gloomy conviction that the majority of his fellow-creatures would inevit-

ably share a still worse fate in the world that is to come: and thus, while the exercise of charity tended to alleviate his individual sorrows, it corroborated his previous misconceptions as to the dark and hopeless destiny of mankind at large.

While the young men of his own rank and station betook themselves to their various morning occupations and amusements, to the public offices, the club-houses, the saunter through the fashionable streets, the ride or drive in the parks, the lounging visit to the

all his care to select none but meritorious objects, he found that he was sometimes deceived and defrauded, and occasionally, though but rarely, requited with ingratitude ; but this did not discourage him, did not restrain the flow of his munificence. "There are many things," would he whisper to himself, "wherein to be sure of doing enough we must often do too much, a truth of which Nature herself is perpetually offering us an illustration. In order that the shower may reach every parched spot of earth that requires refreshment, a portion of it must sometimes fall upon the ungrateful rock, and upon the overflowing sea that needeth it not. But we must not give up use for fear of abuse. Better to bestow alms on a dozen whom they may not immediately benefit, or who may not deserve them, than to pass over one who might perish for want of our assistance."

In one of these charitable excursions, he had made acquaintance with an elderly widow residing in the purlieus of that wretched quarter of Westminster, known by the name of Petty France. She was in deep distress, seemed to

be utterly friendless, had known better days, and therefore felt her reverses more acutely than those who have hardened themselves by an early and constant exposure to the storms and buffets of adversity. After having ascertained, by reference and inquiry, that she was really the victim of unmerited misfortune, he relieved her from her immediate embarrassments, and placed her upon his list for a small half-yearly pension, a mode of rendering assistance which he found the least painful to himself, as well as the most delicate and beneficial to the parties themselves.

Late on the evening of the day when he had been visiting the Colosseum, a letter was delivered to him, purporting to come from the widow in question, stating herself to be at the point of death, and imploring him to pay her an immediate visit, as she had something to communicate important to her own peace of mind, wherein he himself was deeply interested, on which account he was again entreated to come instantly and unaccompanied. Prompted by commiseration for the sufferer whom he

really respected, as well as by a natural curiosity to learn what she had to divulge, he lost not a moment in setting off for her obscure abode, which he had some difficulty in finding, never having visited that quarter except in the day-time, and there being but few and feeble lamps to dissipate the thick foggy darkness that had now shrowded the whole vicinity. At length he found the alley that led to her residence, and, passing to its further extremity, emerged upon a small open space, one side of which was occupied by two or three detached and wretched hovels. Wading through the mud to the farthest of these tenements, not without twice running foul of the poles set up for drying linen, for there was neither lamp nor light of any sort in this miserable outskirt, he knocked at the door of the widow's residence, drawing an ominous conclusion of her death from the silence and darkness of the house. After a short delay, the door was opened, and the voice of a man whom he could not see, inquired, "Is your name Gale Middleton?"

"It is," was the reply;—"How is poor Mrs. Allen?"

"Please to walk in, sir," resumed the stranger, not noticing the question about the widow. Feeling his way over the threshold, Gale did as he was desired ; the door was shut and secured behind him. Before he could advance he was dazzled by the flare of a lantern, dashed close to his face, and at the same moment he was laid prostrate upon the floor, stunned into total insensibility by a tremendous blow upon the temple from a heavy bludgeon !

When a dim and bewildering consciousness revisited him, it was accompanied by an acute pain and throbbing in the head, and a sensation of intense coldness over all the rest of his frame. He opened his eyes, but could not immediately collect his faculties, so as to distinguish external objects, or to recall what had happened. After the lapse of a few minutes, however, he could see that he was lying on the floor in the corner of a small unfurnished room, while, by the rays of a lantern placed upon the mantelshelf, he perceived three men examining

the contents of a purse, which he recognised as his own. The quick and intuitive sense of self-preservation suggesting to him that he had fallen into the hands of robbers, who had intended to murder him, and that his life depended upon their thinking him dead, he remained perfectly motionless, suppressing as much as possible his very breath, though he still peered with half-closed eyes and with a harrowing interest upon the group before him. Two of the party were evidently London ruffians of the very lowest order, but the third seemed to belong to a different class; aspiring to a certain degree of fashion and even of foppery in his dress, he wore rings, seals, a gold chain, and an eyeglass; his narrow-rimmed hat was slightly tilted on one side, in order to display the curls that overshadowed his opposite temple. Though not in the best taste or plight, his clothes were put on with a certain affectation of jauntiness. His figure was small and compact; his pale, sodden face wore an expression of easy impudence, and in his demeanour there was an air of self-sufficient

pretension, which by the vulgar might easily be mistaken for gentility.

"Why, Jem, you buffer!" said this person to the brawny miscreant who held the purse, "you floored him in prime twig, and have faked him out and out with a single flip of your fib!"

"Why, lookye, Gemman Joe; I vas five years a butcher's slavy, and larnt how to floor an ox afore even I join'd the milling coves, and larnt how to floor a spoony. That crack upon the temple is a favourite mill of mine, and my fib, you see, is loaded at the end with blue pigeon,* so that it's as heavy as a rook!"†

"Ay, you have made a proper dummy of him, Jem! No fear of his blowing the gaff!‡ Well, have you turned out his kickseys— and what's the swag?"||

"Not much; only two beans and a bull."§

"Three beans!" growled the fellow who had

* Lead.

† A small iron crow is facetiously termed a rook.

‡ Giving information to the police.

|| What have you found in his pockets.

§ Two sovereigns and a crown.

been hitherto silent, but who had kept a watchful eye upon the contents of the purse ; " what, are you coming the cross upon your pals ?" *

" Come, come, my kiddies," said the first spokesman, who seemed to be the leader of this little gang ; " this is to be a square concern ; we all row in the same boat ; so we 'll share as we go. There 's a bean for each of us, and the bull shall go for lush at the bowsing ken.† Have you knapped any more swag, Jem ?"

" The seedy had never a thimble in his garret,‡ and never a sneezer in his sack ; but I prigged this here fogle|| out of his saltbox, § and that 's all, except his togs, which are no great go — though there 's a new castor, I see, on his nob."

" Stow that, Jem, if you please," said German Joe, as he had been called by his comrade.—" Toggery is too apt to tell tales. I won't have a rag of it fambled. It 's a prime

* Cheating your comrades.

† Drink at the public-house. † No watch in his fob.

|| Silk handkerchief.

§ The outside flap-pocket of a coat is thus called.

job for us already, for we are to touch five-and-twenty guineas a-piece, you know, for doing his business, and we don't get such a grab as that every day."

"When shall we finger the blunt?" asked the third ruffian. "Are you sure of your pal? Will he come to the mark,—will he post the pony?" *

"Yes, old file! I tell you he's a prime swell! The bit's as good as Drummond. I shall make him tow out the shiners to-morrow."

The unfortunate Gale Middleton, totally unversed in the slang language, had listened, as he lay extended in the dark corner of the room, to the discourse of these ruffians, without comprehending more than its general purport, and even this he gathered rather from their looks and actions than their unintelligible phraseology. Now, however, a new and startling light broke suddenly in upon his half-bewildered faculties. It appeared that he had not been decoyed into this den by common thieves in the ordinary exercise of their nefarious calling,

* Will he cash up?

but that murder rather than plunder, was their object ; that they had been hired to assassinate him by some person moving in a superior station to themselves, who must have a deep interest in his death, since he had not hesitated to seek its accomplishment by such atrocious means, and had agreed to pay the bravoes liberally for despatching him. He had heard one of the fellows pronounce the name of Drummond, and another had whispered the word Oliver ; but he knew not what it meant, and an intense, a harrowing, an irrepressible curiosity to gather some further information that might enable him to discover their employer, prompted him to turn his head a little on one side, in order that he might better see the parties and overhear their conversation. This was a most perilous experiment ! Slight as was the movement, and cautiously as it was made, it caught the quick ear of Gentleman Joe, who suddenly exclaimed in a whispering voice, " Stow it, stow it, kiddies ; the cove 's not faked out. I heard him move !"

" Gainmon !" said the second ruffian ; " I

warrant his manchester will never let fall another whid.* Howsomdever, Gemman Joe, I may as well tip him a crack o' t'other side the nob, to make all sure, for this here's a scragging affair if we don't make a clean job on it."

So saying, the miscreant, spitting in his right hand, and grasping his bludgeon, while he took the lantern in his left, stalked to his prostrate victim, stood over his body, and brought the light close to his face! Gale was naturally brave; in another moment it seemed likely that the uplifted bludgeon would descend, perhaps to fracture his scull; and the desperate nature of his predicament, as well as his innate intrepidity, urged him to spring up, at least to make a fierce, however unavailing struggle for his life. But then it occurred to him, for the thoughts rushed through his brain with lightning-velocity, that he might possibly escape the despatching blow if the miscreant believed him to be already dead; and moreover, that he was too powerless, too much numbed by the cold, which had stiffened all

* His tongue will never drop another word.

his joints, to do more than accelerate his fate, by making an effort to avoid it. The idea of calling out for help flashed across his mind, but he doubted whether he could raise more than a feeble cry, and if he could, it was little likely to be heard or noticed in that sequestered haunt. Influenced by these considerations, he determined to stand the brunt of the ruffian's life-involving scrutiny; and accordingly, closing his eyes, and holding his breath, he remained perfectly motionless. It is difficult to conceive a more agonizing trial of fortitude and self-possession, for one heave of his bosom, one shudder of his frame, the involuntary affection of a single muscle, would have been instant and inevitable death! But he stood this fearful ordeal so well, even when the wretch who bestrode him felt his face and hand, that his threatened executioner growled forth—"Gammom! his mug and his mauley are as cold as a key; I warrant he never opens his lamps again. But if you like, Gemman Joe, I'll just chiv sir sidney into him!" *

* Stick a clasp-knife.

"No, no, you buffer; stow that, for blood's a queer blabber now and then, and tells tales. We shall have the drag* here presently. I ordered the cove to come up Dunghill-lane. He wont be long, for Oliver's not in town to-night."†

"I hope he'll bring a lock-up chovey,"‡ replied the ruffian; and so saying, he quitted his position over the prostrate body, and returned to the fire-place to deposit the dark lantern on the shelf. It was most fortunate that he did so, for the touch of his murderous hand, as he felt the face of his victim, had occasioned such a creeping horror throughout Middleton's frame, and such a sudden revulsion of the blood, that he was seized with an irrepressible twitching in the muscles of the face, which would have inevitably ensured his destruction, had the light been still held to his features. Released from this imminent peril, the circumstance was rather favourable than otherwise, for the struggle of nature was more than he could sustain, the scene swam

* The cart. † There's no moon. ‡ A covered cart.

before his eyes, his brain reeled, and he relapsed into an insensibility so deep and total, that it might well have been mistaken for the final sleep of death.

"I say, Gemman Joe," croaked the third fellow of the gang, "if ve be to vait here an hour or two for the drag, you ought to have got us some lush or some grub,* for there's not much in this here crib to keep us varm, and ve ha'n't got no steamers to smoke."

"Ay, ay, I didn't forget that you were a friend of Alderman Lushington's,† so I popped a bottle of heavy wet in the back slum,‡ but we've no time for grubbing and steaming till we've got rid of our cold meat yonder." He turned the tip of his thumb towards the corner where Gale lay extended; his comrade brought the gin from the little back room, or rather closet, and the three desperadoes, who were unprovided with glasses or mugs, successively applied the black bottle to their mouths.

Not less striking than revolting was the scene presented by this small and unfurnished

* Liquor and victuals. † A toper. ‡ Back room.

chamber, as the dark lantern, throwing a narrow but vivid light upon the discoloured panels opposite, and leaving the sides of the room in deep shade, fell with a ghastly and ominous glare upon the countenances of the three wretches thus unconcernedly regaling themselves with gin, while the victim, whom they supposed themselves to have murdered, was stretched at a few paces distance, his livid face, the only part of him that was distinguishable, dimly gleaming with a sort of spectral paleness from the dark corner where he lay. In spite, however, of the recklessness and swaggering looks assumed by the leader of the gang, there was no ferocity in its expression; it might betray a profligate vulgarity, but not an ingrained scoundrelism: nay, there were moments when a discriminating observer would pronounce that he had known better days, and had once been accustomed to mix with far different associates; an inference which derived some support from his manifest struggle to preserve an air of superiority, such as it was, in his dress and appearance, as well as from his complimentary nick-

name of "Gentleman Joe." The brawny ruffian who had inflicted the blow upon Middleton presented just such a result as might have been expected from a drunken thief ingrafted upon a pugilist, and both upon a butcher's slaughterman: confirmed, irredeemable atrocity was branded upon every lineament of his face, which was so inflamed and blotched, that even the wan light of the lantern could not subdue its fiery tone. An animal aspect of mingled suspicion and stupidity characterized the third fellow, who, though silent and passive, as if he scarcely understood the purpose for which he had been hired, was wary and vigilant enough to secure his proper share; not only in the division of the booty, but even in the evacuation of the gin bottle, watching the smallest movement of his confederates with an eye so sharp, sinister, and restless, that it hardly seemed to belong to his sluggish body.

Upon what trifling and unforeseen incidents may the life of a human being depend! While they were thus carousing, a mouse happened to make a rattling noise behind the

wainscot, against which Gale was lying, when the leader of the gang, evidently startled, exclaimed, in an eager whisper, " Damn the leary cove ! the wind isn't out of him yet. Twig him another crack, Jem ! "

" Ay, ay, I'll sarve him out, I warrant," said the fellow, with which words he deposited the gin-bottle, again grasped his bludgeon, and was crossing the room to execute his fell purpose, when the little animal that had scared the whole party, ran clattering along behind the skirting-board, squeaking with a shrill wail as it passed.

" Pshaw !" said Gemman Joe, staying the uplifted hand of his comrade, " you needn't nob him ; he's cold enough ; 'twas only a mouse."

" No more it vornt," said Jem, chuckling in his throat ; " only think that such a little hanimal as that should gammon us in that 'ere vay !" He again put the bottle to his mouth, and passed it to " Gemman Joe," who, however, shook his head, declined taking it, and turned away as if to conceal the emotion with which

he was agitated. A sudden change had indeed come over his features; his impudent swaggering look had entirely left him, his whole countenance was crestfallen, and the perspiration burst from his forehead. Rendered superstitious by their calling and by the jeopardy in which they are so constantly placed, almost all malefactors are profound believers in omens, and Gemman Joe was by no means an exception to this rule. Exclusively of an unaccountable fear and even horror, with which he was always affected on hearing the squeak of a mouse, he imagined it to be a sound of peculiarly evil augury, more surely prognosticating disaster and doom to the hearer than the screech of the boding owl or the tickling of the death-watch. With any visible or tangible danger he would have boldly grappled, but this supernatural warning, for such his strange delusion imagined it, occasioned a curdling of the blood that quite unmanned him; and, though he struggled to subdue his apprehensions, it was with an altered look and voice, that he exclaimed, "Joe, this is the first

scragging job that ever I have been engaged in, and I don't like to hear that confounded squeak, which always sounds in my ears like the tolling of the death-bell in the stone jug.* Jack Bates heard it the very night he was pulled up and sent to quod; and so did Tony Clark on the night of that cracking affair that brought his squeeze to the crap."†

" Gammon ! vot's come to ye?" croaked his comrade. " Vhy, your mug's as long as a pitcher. You rank spoon ! you von't be twisted no sooner acause a mouse knows how to throw off a rum chaunt.‡ Vhy, I've heard you do it yourself, ay, and patter a good flash too,§ when you're not flabbergasted in this here vay."

" Twisted. Ha ha !" said Joe, making an awkward attempt to laugh off his apprehensions; " this is not likely to be a twisting affair ; we're all bang up : no nose|| among us ; and if we had, I know how to gammon the

* Newgate.

+ His neck to the gallows.

† Sing a good song.

§ Talk well. || King's evidence,

twelve* as well as——hark! —douse the darky! What noise is that? I thought I heard a grunter."†

" Heard the devil ! The scouts are all—"

"Stash! hist! there 'tis again!" said Joe, grasping the pummel of a horse-pistol, which he carried inside his waistcoat.

"Gammon! I tell ye vonce more; if it's any thing it's the drag cove; he ought to have been here afore now."

"I hope he can get the chovey up Dunghill-lane."

"Why, you flat, it's broad enough for a rumble-tumble.[†] Ah! that's he! I cotched the sound of his old snorting prad."[§]

A low whistle was now heard at the back of the premises, and "Gemman Joe," who seemed to recover his courage and self-possession in the prospect of quitting the house, and hearing no more squeaks, exclaimed briskly, "Yes, that's Bob—I'll undub the jigger,|| and twig

* Cheat the jury. † A policeman. ‡ A stage coach.

6 Horse. || Unlock the door.

him." He unlocked the door accordingly, and said in a low voice, "Bob, my snatcher, is that you?"

"All right, Gemman Joe," was the reply.

"All right!" echoed the latter, and then returning to his comrades, he said, "Now, then, my pals, bear a hand, and let us get rid of our cold meat."

"When and where are we to vack the blunt?"* asked the third fellow before he moved.

"To-morrow darky, at the old flash ken," was the reply; when the three men raised the still insensible body from the floor, carried it across a small back-yard, and deposited it in the covered cart, which was immediately driven off.

* Divide the money.

CHAPTER VIII.

O, monstrous beast ! how like a swine he lies !
Sirs, I will practise on this drunken man.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN these unconnubial times, a young bachelor of handsome fortune, tolerable good looks, and a title of any sort appended to his name, is so great a *catch*, to use the colloquial term, that the whole world of mammas, aunts, and married sisters, with a pretty girl in one hand, and a hymeneal noose concealed in the other, chase him from morning till night, from the opera to the play, and from the private ball to the public concert, in the hope of securing him ; each as indefatigable in the pursuit as the panting groom whom one sometimes sees running from one corner to another of an exten-

sive field, with a sieve of corn and a hidden halter, striving to catch some skittish horse, who, in the wildness of his liberty, scampers backwards and forwards, desiderating the attractive grain, but having a shrewd presentiment that if he offers to taste it his personal freedom may undergo an unpleasant circumscription. Such a bachelor as we have been describing is veritably a lord of the creation; he "bestrides the narrow earth like a Colossus!" he may exclaim with literal truth, "I am monarch of all I survey!" for he is magis-

disinterested delight in giving him the run of his hunting-box, and the privilege of his preserves, if he be a sportsman; of his marine villa, if he require sea-bathing; or the best berth in his yacht, if he have any nautical yearnings? Fortunate bachelor! he enjoys everything without the trouble of ordering or of paying for anything!

But what are these gross and physical advantages compared to the moral beatitudes that form a bright although perchance a deceptive halo around the happy wight, who is thus receiving perpetual courtship, not from one but from all; who is spared the annoyance of keeping house and of returning these civilities; who sees the soul of society, as it were, in a sabbath dress, and the whole world through a medium of rose-colour? Instead of the anger, hatred, and malice, with which others are pestered, he beholds nothing but love, charity, and cheerfulness: the women are all amiable, the men all friendly; both parties disinterested! He luxuriates in an antepast of the millennium!

" So, by a calenture misled,
The mariner with rapture sees,
On the smooth ocean's azure bed,
Enamell'd meads and verdant trees."

Every medal, it is true, has its reverse ; and in every scene the darkness of the shadow is proportioned to the brilliancy of the light : pithy apophthegms, of which we leave the application to those middle-aged bachelors who, being given up by the world as incurable celibates, are placed upon the shelf ; who are abandoned to the solitude of their monkish clubs ; whose compulsory dullness and seclusion are embittered by the remembrance of past gaiety and favouritism ; and who find that they are shut out from society, and more especially from the charms of female companionship, just when they have most need of those domestic blessings which can alone give pleasantness to the down-hill path of life, smooth the bed of sickness, and disarm death itself of a portion of its terrors.

We cannot take upon ourselves to affirm that these latter considerations had so far out-

weighed the imagined felicities of bachelor-life as to have prompted Sir Dennis Lifford's offer at the Colosseum ; but certain it is that, as he sat at Mivart's Hotel, discussing his dinner with the aid of a bottle of claret, he reflected with no small complacency on the effort that he had made to conquer his habitual indolence, and on the happy result of his exertions. Had he been aware that ever since his arrival in town he had been the object of the most complicated though covert manœuvring and finesse, on the part of the mammas to whom he had been introduced, mostly through the agency of the bustling Mrs. Burroughs ; and that, at the very moment when he was sipping his claret, " all alone by himself," he was occupying the thoughts of perhaps a dozen maternal match-makers, to say nothing of young ladies, whose numbers we will not presume to guess, he might probably have regretted his precipitation, and have wished that he had exercised a wider range of choice before he committed himself by propounding the irrevocable question. Happy in his ignorance of these facts,

and of the signal sensation he had made, less, however, by his personal merits than by his title, his estates, and his expected peerage, he congratulated himself on his selection of the fair Cecilia, and resolved to accelerate his marriage as much as possible, in order that he might reach Paris, where it was his intention to pass the honeymoon, in time for a grand public entertainment which was shortly to be given in that gay metropolis. This excursion would be a treat for his bride, who had never been abroad, and he wished her to commence her matrimonial career under as favourable auspices as possible.

Sir Dennis, however, seldom thought so much of others as to forget himself. Having settled his future plans, he deemed it right to settle the present position of his whiskers; wherefore he sauntered up to a glass, adjusted them with an almost mathematical precision, returned the diminutive comb to his pocket, took out a tiny pair of scissors, snipped off a single hair that he had caught in the act of playing truant, gave a more becoming twirl to the lock that fell over

his left temple, and felt altogether so well satisfied with his prospects, both in the mirror before him and in the glass of futurity, that he successively ordered a fresh bottle of claret, and got up to drill his curls and his whiskers, till he could get up no more, and was finally carried to bed by the waiters, who had found him on the floor in the heavy sleep of intoxication.

Others there were, who were scarcely less elated than the baronet by the offer made and accepted in the Swiss cottage of the Colosseum. Cecilia, although agitated by so novel an occurrence as a lover kneeling at her feet amid rocks and waterfalls, to the somewhat incongruous accompaniment of fighting ducks and cooing doves; while she was not less pleased at the success of the little manœuvrings she had put in practice under her mother's tuition than at the prospect of making so advantageous a match, and of being ultimately elevated to the peerage; was not of a temperament to be very vividly or durably excited by emotions of any sort. Good temper, or rather placidity, may

be constitutional, we had almost said, physical; it may proceed from the want rather than from the proper control of feeling. This was pretty much the case with Cecilia, whose negative character we have already noticed, and whose consequent equanimity seldom underwent more than a momentary disturbance. Still, however, the most phlegmatic young lady can hardly be expected to retain her self-possession when she is asked to put herself in possession of another, and that other a wealthy baronet, likely to raise her to a higher sphere than that in which she had previously moved. Cecilia's heart had not quite returned to its customary pulsation, nor had the flush of surprise and excitement quite deserted her cheeks, when, on returning from the Colosseum, she ascended to her own room, and immediately ran to the glass.

"Well!" she exclaimed, smiling at the unusual bloom of her face and the still rarer animation that lingered in her eyes; "mamma is certainly right; this is the most becoming bonnet I ever had! I declare I have got quite a fine colour, and yet that spiteful Mrs. O'Grady

affected only yesterday to regret that I was always so pale ; as if it were not a thousand times genteeler to be fair than to have such milkmaid faces as her cherry-cheeked daughters. I wonder what they will say, and Miss French, and the Framptons, and cousin Maltby, and those conceited Hendersons, who are always giving themselves such airs, when they hear that I am to be Lady Lifford, and perhaps in three or four years, the Countess of Ballycoreen. Lady Gauntley, I remember, told mamma, with one of her polite sneers, that it was not sufficient now-a-days for a girl to have money, she must have beauty besides ; well, I quite agree with her, only the beauty of others need not be like that of her scraggy daughters. One can be handsome, I suppose, without being a grenadier ; and have a good figure, I presume, without being pinched in half, like a wasp." As she denounced these characteristics of the Miss Gaunteleys, it was remarkable that Cecilia raised herself up to her full height, even until her heels no longer touched the carpet, while she drew her belt so tight that she

could hardly breathe, as if anxious to obtain some little portion of the superfluous height and slimness which might so well be spared by the Miss Gauntleys. Having completed this process, she took off her bonnet, but instead of ringing for Horton, her maid, to put it away, she carefully blew off a modicum of dust from its rim, deposited it with her own hands in the wardrobe, and covered it tenderly with a cambric handkerchief. The species of flattery conveyed by a peculiarly becoming article of dress is the most endearing, the most ingra-

shoulders, instead of the head and bonnet, were about to be separated for ever !

Lady Middleton was better pleased at the thought of the annoyance which the contemplated marriage would occasion to her competitor, Mrs. Howard Maltby, than of the happiness which it was likely to confer on Cecilia. As the sweetest wine, when once it is turned, makes the sourest vinegar, so are the quarrels of near relations apt to be more sharp and acrimonious than those among simple friends and acquaintance. In these cases, conscience sometimes makes us malevolent, and we the more bitterly hate those who have once enjoyed our confidence, because we are aware that they knew enough to warrant their hatred of us. This it is that throws such a peculiar charm, beyond that of mere novelty, around those friendships which are too recent to have allowed the discovery of mutual faults and failings, or to have awakened the unpleasant feeling that the parties are in each other's power, which, to a certain extent, must be the case in

all unreserved intimacies. In the higher circles, moreover, a quarrel soon degenerates into rancour, and fixes itself in the heart, because it has no allowable vent beyond sneer, insinuation, and polite scandal, which, though they may be sufficient to carry off the regular evaporation of hatred, rather sustain than diminish its quantity. With vulgar people, on the contrary, the mouth is a safety-valve, which prevents the accumulation of any dangerous vapour and the chances of an explosion. They get into a passion, they storm, they swear, they abuse, they pour forth all their rage and dislike in a single day, and, after a night's sleep, they are ready for a reconciliation. The soft gentle voice with which Lady Middleton always spoke of her sister was the zephyr that fanned the flame of her resentment, and kept it alive when a furious gust would have blown it out.

Although she waited with some impatience the arrival of Sir Matthew, in order that she might be the first to communicate to him the happy tidings, her Ladyship was too strict an

observer of proprieties to run out to meet him, when she heard the knock that announced his arrival, or to betray any undue elation as she recounted what had occurred at the Colosseum, and the purposed visit of Sir Dennis on the following morning. To her own skilful diplomacy and good management, coupled with the discreet instructions she had given Cecilia, she attributed the successful capture of Sir Dennis, whose fashionable manners and appearance she again warmly eulogised, diverging from this point to his large estates in Donegal, the prospect of the earldom of Ballycoreen, and the certainty that by such an alliance they themselves would be lifted into a higher sphere, and be enabled to move among the most select circles. "Poor dear Ciss!" exclaimed the father, in a softened voice, as he fixed his eyes upon an opposite chair, and remained silently pondering for two or three minutes. "Glad to see her happy, poor thing!" he continued; "but lord! how I shall miss the girl in the house: won't be like the same place, hey!—flat as ditch water—dull as 'Change on a Sunday."

" But why should you look so melancholy, when ——."

" 'Cause 'tis my own flesh and blood : wouldn't like to have your leg cut off, would ee ? Don't much fancy that Irish chap ; afraid to trust any of them further than you can hook 'em back again with a crooked stick. Look what we lost by Murphy and Mayhew, of Dublin, and O'Connor and Leary, of Limerick :— nothing but bad debts with those Paddies : all lame ducks,—hey !—hick !"

" My dear Sir Matthew, you are neither going to execute an order for Sir Dennis, nor to take his acceptance. You forget that he is a baronet and a gentleman."

" Only to think of my losing dear little Ciss !" said the father, " never out of my sight hardly since I dandled her upon my knee in Lawrence-Pountney Lane. Well ! all 's uncertain ; here to-morrow, and gone to-day ; life 's a bubble, full of trouble. Lord, if her poor dear mother, ah ! *she* was a kind-hearted creature ! if she were alive now, and saw Ciss

turned into my lady, and like to be a countess. Hick, hick, hick !”

The baronet’s chuckle was but faintly given ; it wanted its usual sharp hilarity ; he blew his nose, and surreptitiously stole the handkerchief up to the corner of his eye, but not so adroitly as to be unobserved by Lady Middleton, who exclaimed, smilingly, but nevertheless with a frown at her heart, “ These allusions are not particularly pleasant, my dear Sir Matthew.”

“ Like enough, like enough ; two of a trade never agree—claw me, claw you—meant no harm—give every one their due, and play fair, that’s my motto. Heads I win, tails you lose, —hey, hick ! Sha’n’t consent to her marrying this whiskered Jackadandy if she’s to live in Ireland ; tell ‘ee that, plump !”

“ Sir Dennis is much too fashionable a person not to be an absentee. He may occasionally visit his estates, but his permanent residence will doubtless be in England, and most likely in London.”

“ Ah ! if she had married Ned Travers now,

would have lived in Broad Street Buildings; capital situation, good house. Just the thing for me ; might have popped in at luncheon-time—Ned 's a famous fellow for tender mutton-chops, and a nice beef-steak pudding ; and might have seen dear Ciss every day. Got some prime old Madeira too."

The wife, who was not deficient in penetration, saw his rising objections to the match fortified by this beatific vision of the daily luncheon : but she knew also his strong affection for his daughter, and she dwelt therefore

Portland Place, not to please himself but his wife, whose affectation of fashion and restless anxiety to be admitted into the upper circles he at once ridiculed and deplored. But when the foibles that he thus lamented in another courted his own adoption under the semblance of paternal duty, he yielded with a good grace, piquing himself upon discharging an imperative obligation, when he was in fact only indulging his own latent propensities in the person of his daughter.

Just as Lady Middleton had completely reconciled Sir Matthew to the projected match, Cecilia entered the room, dressed with more than usual care, and looking so well, for her cheeks had not entirely lost their flush, that her father gazed at her with a proud complacency, held out his arms, and drawing her towards him, kissed her with a loud and hearty smack, congratulating her on the conquest she had made, and wishing her joy with such rough shakings of the hand that the disconcerted girl was glad to sink into a chair by his side. Still, however, he retained, and occa-

sionally kissed one of her hands as he exclaimed, "Bless 'ee, girl, bless 'ee, dear Ciss ! and so thee be going to marry, and leave the old man. Lord ! it's like tearing the heart out of one's body, taking away my little Ciss, that's always been playing about by my side like a kitten, only she never scratched and quarrelled. Your poor mother used to say you were too good-tempered—so did I; let every little girl take away your playthings ;—make yourself all honey, and the flies will eat 'ee up—he ! Sure I ought to love 'ee—my own flesh and blood, arn't 'ee ? and a good child thee 'st ever been to me; never forgot my lozenges of a morning to give me an appetite ; always well spoken that I must say. Showed sense there — fair words put off rotten apples :—always dutiful to me and to thy poor —. Ah, well ! she's dead and gone ! Always did as I bid 'ee — always put nutmeg into my fish-sauce — always — I mean never — and now thee 'st going to —."

Towards the conclusion of his speech, the father's voice gradually broke into a husky whisper; striving at every pause to gulp down

his emotion, he made several efforts to pronounce the words, "leave me," but the sounds were lost in a suppressed sigh, which he tried to turn into a cough, and two or three big tears which had been gathering in his eyes, rolling down his rough, red face, fell upon his daughter's hand.

Lady Middleton was amazed at an emotion which she could not at all comprehend ; Cecilia, much affected, jumped up and kissed her father's cheek, and Sir Matthew, hugging and embracing his daughter, would probably have wept outright and blubbered aloud, but that at this juncture the second dinner-bell sounded, when he started up with alacrity, crying out in his usual voice, "Ha ! glad to hear that—bread-basket empty—no time for snivelling. Come along—where's Gale? always too late—bad sign that. Capital salmon—bought it of Myers, St. Michael's Alley—now then—hey—hick!"

At the commencement of dinner, the baronet was too busy to speak ; but as he appeased his voracity, for his appetite was proportioned to his bulk, he gradually mixed in the conversa-

tion, emptying his glass rapidly, and chattering with a good-humour that suffered no check until he had occasion to call for pepper. Du-pin being at that moment the only servant in the room, his master, who had taken, half jestingly, several dinner-lessons in French from Cecilia, and was disposed on the present occasion to show his proficiency, called out two or three times, "*donnez moi*," and pointed to the article he wanted, forgetting the French word for pepper; but as the Gaul only elevated his shoulders and his eyebrows, ejaculating with a look of bewilderment, "*Plait-il, Sare Matthieu?*" the baronet, whose maccaroni was cooling, while he himself was getting hot, at last lost his temper, and roared out with a crimsoned face, "The pepper and be damned to 'ee! —Why casn't speak English like a man, ye spindle-shanked *parlez-vous*? Where's William? As well have a kangaroo behind one's chair as this." He had no time to say more, for the desiderated stimulant had been supplied, and he addressed himself seriously to his dish, which proved to be so good, that it

presently restored his equanimity, especially as the superfluity of pepper, which he had administered in his wrath, afforded him an excuse for two quick succeeding bumpers of Madeira. Lady Middleton, in the mean time, had been enlarging upon her favourite topic, the fashion and elegance of Sir Dennis's appearance, when Sir Matthew broke in upon her eulogy, by exclaiming, "Badly dressed, badly dressed—all rags!"

"What! Sir Dennis Lifford?" shrieked both the females at once.

"Psha! speaking of the chickens; what should make me think of Sir Dennis at dinner-time? S'pose *you* did, 'cause you saw this maccaroni before 'ee. Had he there!—hick! hick! hick!—ha! ha! ha!"

As he seldom ventured on a joke, the baronet may stand excused for indulging in the full extent of his laugh, which was so singular as to deserve a passing notice. The three first interjections were a sharp loud chuckle, to which his stomach heaved upwards in accordance, and there he would sometimes end; but

when his irresistible risibility required the conclusion it constituted an almost superhuman cachinnation, given with such an outbursting cordiality and enjoyment that few hearers could sufficiently restrain their sympathies to avoid mingling in the mighty mirth.

"Ah!" sighed Lady Middleton, "I was just expressing my regret that Gale, who is really quite a sloven ——."

"Where is Gale?" interrupted the husband. "Poor boy! dinner all cold—shocking! shocking! Serve him right, though — man who neglects his most important duties, ought to be be punished, hey,—hick!"

"As he is neither in his own room nor in his laboratory," replied Lady Middleton, "I presume he is still at the Colosseum, where we left him apostrophising the painted houses in the most extraordinary way I ever heard off the stage. The young man's wits seem to me to be always woogathering."

"Don't gather much;—great cry and little wool, as the devil said when he sheared his sheep, hey!—hick! Very wrong—ought to be

here : look devilish blue when he finds the fish cold. Talking of that, Meg—Lady Middleton I mean—forgot to tell 'ee, seen the captain of the *Arethusa*—clever fellow that Bracebridge—one hundred and ninety serons prime Guatimala indigo—seen a sample of the cochineal—capital. Drugs looking up—hides come to a good market ; clever fellow that Bracebridge—'spose we drink his health, hey !—hick !"

In vain did the wife and daughter try to turn the conversation into a more interesting channel, by talking of Sir Dennis, and wondering what had become of Gale. Sir Matthew was on board the *Arethusa*, whose cargo he recapitulated *seriatim*, stating the prospects of the market, as he enumerated the various articles, and drinking fresh bumpers to the health of Captain Bracebridge, so that the ladies, who had much more important matters to discuss, took an early opportunity of withdrawing upstairs.

While they were at tea, they heard a double knock, when Cecilia, who took it for granted that her brother, to whom she was sincerely

attached, had come home, inquired whether she might communicate to him the important occurrence of the morning. "There can be no objection but its inutility," was the reply, "for in an hour he will forget the whole circumstance, and be 'climbing trees in the Hesperides,' or apostrophising the moon, as if he were a new Endymion. He loves nothing but books, chemical apparatus, and fustian soliloquies."

"Nay, now you do him injustice, indeed you do. He loves everything and everybody.

door was opened, and Dupin, instead of ushering in Gale, as she expected, announced her civic lover, Mr. Travers, whose cold reception was perhaps more attributable to the disappointment of which he was the unconscious author, than to any positive dissatisfaction at his presence, inopportune as it might be deemed. Indeed, there was nothing whatever to dislike about him, though he did not possess the happy art of ingratiating himself with the other sex, in spite of his personal appearance, which was rather in his favour. Keen, active, and intelligent, as a man of business — qualities which, in conjunction with his well-appointed luncheons and dinners, had completely won him the heart of Sir Matthew, Travers was, nevertheless, so diffident, not to say sheepish, in the society of females, so easily abashed by their ridicule, or frightened by their frowns, that he could not display to advantage the information and good qualities which he really possessed, and was often accused of being dull and stupid, when his reserve was solely occasioned by his timidity. Lady Middleton, who,

with a strange inconsistency, affected to despise everything civic, treated him with a cold, distant politeness, for she was never rude to any one; and Cecilia, although she really entertained some predilection for her mercantile suitor, followed the injunctions of her mother, and gave no encouragement whatever to his addresses. Hopeless, however, as his attachment might appear, he could not eradicate it from his bosom, and occasionally came up to Portland Place to tea, though he could scarcely fail to perceive that his visits were little

is a necklace which I had commissioned Captain Bracebridge to procure at Buenos Ayres, the only place where they are manufactured. Of little intrinsic value, for it consists only of minute shells, it is, nevertheless, curious from its rarity, as well as from the skill with which it is strung together." He handed it to Lady Middleton. Cecilia ran up to look at it, and both were loud in its praise, for they had previously seen nothing of the sort, and in baubles novelty is the highest possible merit. "I had a great favour to ask," resumed Travers, blushing and looking down; "as the toy is of such trifling value, I had hoped, if I did not think it would be deemed presumptuous, that is to say, I ventured—I mean I intended to request Miss Middleton to do me the honour of accepting it."

"La!" cried Cecilia; "and did you think of this so long ago as when Captain Bracebridge sailed? How very kind of you! I should have been most happy to accept it, and I feel not the less obliged by your consideration, but just at this moment there would be

an impropriety — I must beg leave to decline your offer. There are circumstances which prevent my — " she hesitated and looked at her mother.

Lady Middleton, to whose meanness in trifles we have already adverted, thought it was now time to interfere, not only to secure the trinket, which she really admired, but to give a final dismissal to the civic suitor, whom she could not abide. " Since it is of such trifling value, Mr. Travers," said her Ladyship, " I can have no objection to accept it for myself, as a little

Earl of Ballycoreen ! a most advantageous match !”

“Indeed ! you amaze me. This is very sudden, is it not ? I am very glad, if it will make Miss Middleton happy ; and as to any other consideration, I shall endeavour to bear—I must submit !—it will be very trying !—my heart must learn—I beg your pardon ; I scarcely know what I am saying. I hope you will forgive me ?”

Neither of his companions knowing what to say to relieve the evident distress and agitation of the rejected lover, an embarrassing silence succeeded, which was at length broken by Lady Middleton, who sought to turn the conversation, by asking him whether he would take tea. “No, thank you, madam ; I came on purpose—” was the not very intelligible reply ; and another pause ensued, during which the mother placed herself at the table, while Cecilia, who really felt for her discarded suitor, as she saw his countenance working, pretended to be searching very diligently in her empty reticule. As there is an extremity of danger

that conquers fear by converting it into desperation, so there is a vehemence of emotion that banishes all reserve and timidity. Such was the situation of Travers, who, starting suddenly from his chair, approached Cecilia, took her hand, pressed it respectfully to his lips, fixed his glistening eyes upon her face, and exclaimed in a tender, earnest voice, "God bless you, Miss Middleton! May you be as happy as you deserve—as happy as I wish you to be!" So saying, he bowed, hurried out of the room, ran down stairs, and quitted the

flattered their pride in its most sensitive point, and it is impossible to hate him who has made us better love ourselves. By a strange caprice, only to be thus accounted for, Cecilia had never felt half so well disposed towards Travers as at the present moment, when she had given him his final dismissal, and was engaged to be married to another.

Sir Matthew joined them soon after tea; but it was agreed to say nothing to him of what had just occurred, lest he should be prompted by his acknowledged partiality for Travers to throw some impediment in the way of the match with Sir Dennis. Their chief subject of conversation was the non-appearance of Gale, who had not presented himself when the supper-tray was brought up. His habits, however, were so eccentric, that this circumstance excited conjecture rather than apprehension, and the family retired to bed at their usual hour, one of the servants having been ordered to sit up for the absentee.

CHAPTER IX.

Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in?

Is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place—
shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears?

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Gale Middleton slowly recovered consciousness, his first sensation was that of a cold numbness throughout his body, so intense and total as to have even stilled the throbbing anguish in his head. For some time his ideas were too confused and bewildered to allow him to recall the occurrences of the night, although an indistinct notion that he had been the victim of some violence and robbery floated vaguely in his mind. Even when the frightful scene

in the widow's cottage at length presented itself to his recollection, he inclined at first to think that it was all a phantasm of sleep, a hideous dream, a nightmare: but, as the circulation of his blood became restored, the returning pain and pulsation in his temple convinced him that it was indeed a frightful reality, and he kept his eyes closed, and suppressed his breath, under the harrowing apprehension that the athletic ruffian with his uplifted bludgeon might still be bestriding him, ready, if he detected the smallest sign of animation, to dash out his brains. In this agony of suspense he remained for some minutes, his ear, the only sense that he dared to exercise, listening with an intense eagerness to catch the smallest sound that might confirm or dispel his fears. There reigned a perfect and profound silence: but, as the assassins might still be around him, though not speaking, he listened, in order that he might catch their smallest breathing, should they be within hearing distance. After a while, he became thoroughly convinced that he was alone, and yet it was not

without a violent palpitation of the heart that he ventured to peep from beneath his half-closed eyelids. He could discern nothing; all was dark. He raised his lids a little more, when a faint glimmering of light became visible, while he distinctly felt a puff of cold air pass over his face. Persuaded from this circumstance that he was no longer lying on the floor of the little room, but exposed, wherever he might be, to the breezes of heaven, he opened his eyes entirely, and saw the bright stars glimmering far, far above him, in the

unexpectedly in the immediate presence, as it were, of a violent death, can imagine the passionate yearning with which we cling to life, even though we may have had little cause to hold it in previous estimation. Of this Gale Middleton afforded a signal illustration. Little as he had hitherto coveted existence, he now clung to the hope of its prolongation with an unutterable avidity, that absorbed every faculty of his soul, quickening his apprehensions of danger, while it suggested expedients for avoiding it. The sweet and tender charities of life, its hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows, his social and domestic attachments, the pensioners who depended on his bounty, together with all the beauties, the marvels, and the mysteries of creation, rushed in upon his heart and memory with such an overpowering effect, that the tears burst involuntarily from his eyes, dimming the sight of the calm heavens upon which he had been gazing with such a devout and consoling fervour. But their hallowing influence was not lost. Afraid to break the thrilling silence that brooded around him, he

offered up a fervent mental thanksgiving as he thus lay rapt and motionless, and felt a fresh courage in the thought that he had a sure protector and defence against his present perils, whatever might be their nature, in the Deity by whom he had been so marvellously preserved from destruction.

It behoved him, however, to be instrumental to his own safety, to use every precaution for avoiding the perils with which he might be surrounded. Fearing that he might still be in the power of his intended assassins, he determined, before he would make any attempt at escape, to ascertain if possible where he was. He could perceive that his view of the sky was circumscribed and confined to a narrow space by some mass that encompassed him around; but, though he turned his eyes repeatedly on either side, the darkness would not allow him to discover its nature further than to observe that it rose perpendicularly, leaving only sufficient space for his extended body. Under the notion that he was dead, the ruffians might, perhaps, have cast him into some deep and

lonely pit, in which event he had only to remain quiet until the morning dawned, when he might extricate himself, with good assurance that he would not be again waylaid and assaulted, of which he could hardly be certain were he to venture to escape in the dark.

As these thoughts passed rapidly across his mind, the gloom of his enclosure decreased, or his vision became better accustomed to it, and, in the earthen wall surrounding him, he was enabled to distinguish objects which thrilled his whole shuddering frame with the horrible, the appalling, conviction that he was lying at the bottom of a deep and newly dug grave! Yes, it was impossible to doubt the nature of the hideous receptacle into which he had been cast. Fragments of coffins, mingled with loathsome and revolting remnants of mortality, protruded from the dark, rank soil on either side, while, opposite to him, towards the upper surface, his terrified fancy bodied forth a skull, whose eyeless sockets, catching the dim starlight, seemed to be fixed upon him with a withering glare. The nauseous smell of death

was in his nostrils; a sickening horror crept through his veins; and he was now doubly urged to attempt his instant extrication, first by his natural disgust of being thus buried alive; and, secondly, by the fear that the miscreants, who had doubtless thrown him into this excavation in the belief of his death, and as the most effectual means of concealing their victim, would speedily return to cast in the earth upon his body and complete their purpose.

Impelled by these terrors, he made an immediate effort to rise, when he found to his unutterable consternation that his limbs refused to move, that he had completely lost all muscular power, and was totally helpless. Consciousness and volition remained, but in every other respect he was dead; his body was a corpse, and the grave seemed to be its proper depository! The effort that he had made to move, combined, perhaps, with the shuddering revulsion of his frame, sent a rush of blood to his head that bewildered his mental perceptions, under which temporary hallucination he entertained the strange phantasy that he was

indeed dead, and that the soul was only lingering for a short while in the body before it took its final flight. While labouring under this delusion, it appeared to him at times that the skies, upon which his regards were fixed, gradually lowered themselves until they were brought so close to him that he could perceive flying companies of seraphs, and hear the dulcet symphonies of the angelic choir : while, at other moments, he felt as if the grave were lifted up from the earth, and received into the innermost depths of the heavens, floating with him from sphere to sphere, in search of that celestial mansion to which he was ultimately destined. "Now, then!" he mentally ejaculated, "I shall soon solve the great and hitherto inscrutable mystery of my being. As I had been convinced by the operations of dreams that the mind might be awake when the body was asleep, so was I persuaded that the soul might live when its corporeal tegument was laid asleep in death. Lo! I have now an irrefragable proof. My soul, the restless bird which has so long been beating itself

against the bars of its cage, is about to make its escape, to spread its wings, and to soar upwards. But whither? To what unknown spheres will it be wafted; what new modes of existence will it assume; what novel senses and enjoyments will be imparted to it; what higher and more exquisite intellectual faculties will it develop; and will it retain any recollection of its pains or pleasures in its mortal and sublunary state?"

These and other reveries continued for some time to flit across his wandering brain; the

clarion that he had just heard seemed to restore him, as it were, to vitality, to the world, and to the whole train of thoughts that had rushed upon his brain when he first recovered consciousness. Now came again the eager, the absorbing, the overwhelming desire of life, the irrepressible impatience for escape, the shuddering horror of the grave, the heart-withering fear that his assailants might return. But the agony of his mind did not rouse his limbs from their torpor; nerveless, immovable, powerless, he could do nothing to avert his fate; he must lie where he was, to be butchered like an unresisting victim, or to encounter a still more horrid doom by being buried alive, and smothered with the nauseous earth that surrounded him. Conscious that his life depended on the breaking of a new day, he kept his eyes fixed on the stars, watching them as if each were an executioner holding an uplifted axe over his neck, and at length perceived, with an ecstasy not the less rapturous because it was confined within his silent bosom, that

that their twinklings became less vivid, and that they gradually grew pale and wan, while the sky assumed a lighter and a greyer tint.

Reassured by this prospect of the dawn, he gazed for a moment at the opposite extremity of the grave, in order to ascertain whether the dim light had sufficiently penetrated into its depths to disclose what it was that oppressed his limbs with such a sense of weight and coldness. The bottom of the pit was as dark as ever, but towards the surface his eyes fell upon the imbedded skull by which he had been previously appalled. Its orbless sockets glared upon him more distinctly than before, and with such a power of fascination, that, in spite of the horror they inspired, he could neither close nor turn away his eyes. Riveted as if by some potent spell, they continued immovable until a crow flew over the grave, intercepting the faint light that had gleamed into the sockets. To the disturbed faculties of him who was thus intently staring upon them, it seemed as if they winked at him, a prodigy so ghastly and appalling, that by a

violent effort he drew down his lids, and kept his eyes shut for some time, shuddering and thrilling throughout his whole frame.

A second crowing of the cock, which sounded in his ears like a reprieve from death, at length emboldened him to open them, when he perceived, with an ineffable delight, that the day had distinctly dawned; and, as he stole his looks hesitatingly towards the supposed skull, now fully and clearly visible, he discovered that it was a round indented stone, bearing some resemblance to the object into which his imagination had fashioned it. Freed from the apprehensions that had beleaguered him, and cherishing a full and sweet assurance that he should eventually preserve his life, he drew up his breath with a renovated courage, and felt as much relieved from his previous oppression of spirit as if a stone had been rolled from his breast. Still, however, the same weight pressed upon his limbs, and, as the gathering light stole dimly down to the bottom of the grave, he perceived that his legs and arms, probably benumbed with cold when he was first cast into it,

were covered with earth, which seemed to have been thrown over him in haste, and to have escaped or fallen from his head owing to its being slightly elevated by resting against the back of the grave. Here was fresh subject for amazement, conjecture, and gratitude : but his thoughts were otherwise occupied, for by this time it was bright day-break, he caught various sounds that convinced him the neighbourhood was awake and stirring ; and, as the near whistling of a passenger met his ear, he determined to make an effort to procure assistance, and

boy and the hoarse growl of his master—noises more grateful to his ear at the moment than the most exquisite music. Again he called out for assistance, but it was with a feeble voice that seemed scarcely loud enough to attract attention, unless some wayfarer should chance to be passing close to the grave; and, as he felt himself every moment growing more weak and faint, he began to fear that he should perish from cold and exhaustion before any one could discover him. He closed his eyes, for his senses began once more to wander, while before his dizzy brain there floated a beatific vision of cherubim and seraphs, poising themselves upon silver-feathered pinions in an atmosphere of roseate light, and singing mellifluously to the accompaniment of their harps. Opening at length his eyes, as the sound of approaching footsteps dissipated this pleasant phantasm, he beheld, peering over the edge of the grave, two diminutive figures whom, by their sable hue and grim aspect, he might well have imagined to be imps from the realms of darkness rather than those angelic forms of which he had just

been dreaming. He moved his head, however, and murmured the word "Help!" when the sooty urchins, for they were little chimney-sweeps, uttered a cry of terror, and scampered from the place as fast as their heels could carry them. Their casual visit, however, to the grave eventually saved the life of its unfortunate inmate, although three-quarters of an hour still elapsed, and he was on the very point of perishing, before any succour arrived. At this early day-break but few of the neighbours were stirring, and these were prompted by their superstitious terrors rather to fly from the spot than to approach and extricate the sufferer. When interrogated as to the cause of their outcry, the young sweeps solemnly averred that they had both seen and heard a ghost, which was so irresistibly confirmed by their fear-fraught countenances, and the positive refusal of one of them to venture back for his brush, which he had dropped in his flight, that the gossips and others collected around them, listening with eager looks to their statement, felt not the smallest desire to have ocular evidence of its

truth. Few indeed ventured to cast their eyes in the direction of the church-yard, but each huddled close to his neighbour, as if anxious to borrow, from contact with flesh and blood and the security of numbers, a protection against the machinations of the ghost, should it presume to play truant and emerge from its appropriate haunt, the burial-ground.

One apparition makes many. Several of the old women of either sex thus assembled were provided with other and equally indisputable tales of spectres and spirits, which they proceeded to recount with all the minute circumstantiality of such fictions, until they were silenced and laughed to scorn by an enlightened milkman, who, having seated himself upon one of his pails, while his yoke was slung diagonally across his body, informed his auditors with some pomposity of manner, that he belonged to a Mechanics' Institute; alluded to the march of intellect; ridiculed the ignorant credulity that could believe in the existence of ghosts; and insisted that the sweeps, influenced by the superstitious terrors always felt by such illiterate

creatures, in passing through the church-yard, had been deceived by some optical illusion, at which they themselves would be the first to laugh, when they discovered its real nature. "If that be the case, Master Jenkins," said an old woman as she rested both hands upon her crutch-headed stick and looked at the orator with an expression of sneering malice—"mayhap you wouldn't mind just stepping to the grave, and seeing what it is, and telling us the rights on't.' 'Twouldn't be a minute's job."

"If I were going that way," replied the purveyor of milk, "shouldn't mind a farthing; but I mustn't keep my customers waiting. I tell you it's all humbug: ghost, indeed! not such a soft Tommy as to believe any rubbish of that sort—bah!" So saying, he hastily slipped the yoke over his shoulders, hooked up the pails, and decamped in double-quick time, taking a direction opposite to the church-yard.

"Ha! ha!" croaked the beldame, showing her toothless gums as she winked her eyes, and drew up her shrivelled lips in scorn, "I

thought he was a dunghill cock by his crowing so loud."

A pieman, who looked stout and stalwart enough to face a whole legion of ghosts, being challenged to perform the feat which the recreant milk-vender had declined, pretended to hear himself called, and bolted round a corner, crying out—"Pies ! pies ! hot mutton pies !"

The remainder of the group, who had caught the contagion of an additional fear from the manifest alarm of the fugitives, now huddled together more closely than before, when, to their great relief a policeman came up to enquire the cause of their assemblage, which half-a-dozen stated at the same moment, all urging him to proceed forthwith to the church-yard, as was his bounden duty, and demand of the apparition what it wanted, and why it thus disturbed the peace of the neighbourhood. But it was objected by the functionary to whom this requisition was addressed, that the burial-ground was out of his beat, that his constabulary duty did not extend to posthumous trans-

gressors, but was strictly limited to living malefactors, and that the ghost in question, if any such there were, fell within the jurisdiction of the parson, who, being paid for burying people, was answerable for their subsequent good behaviour, and their continuance in the grave to which they had been legally and comfortably committed. An argument so logical there was no rebutting; it was unanimously pronounced to be a case for the parson, but it was known that he would not be stirring for two or three hours to come; his clerk, whose presence and assistance might be necessary, resided at some distance; and in the mean time the ghost, should it hear the crowing of a cock, might evaporate and disappear without satisfying their curiosity —an escape the more to be apprehended because the grave was described as being quite open.

"That 'ere makes no odds," observed a cobbler, who had now joined the throng. "Them spiritous creatures doesn't want no thoroughfare; they can make their way where there's no way whatsomdever. What is a apparition like? Why, it's like the smell of roast

pork, which will mount from the kitchen to the garret, tho' all the doors and windows are fastened as tight as winky, and nobody can't tell how it travell'd. I don't say a ghost is like the smell of roast pork to look at, but only mentions this just to illustrate the objick."

"There was no open grave in the churchyard yesterday," said the policeman ; "and if there's one now, it must be the work of the body-snatchers."

This observation threw a completely new light upon the affair, and operated a marvellous change in the minds of the auditors. It was pertinently suggested, that instead of a ghost the sweeps might have disturbed one of these violators of the grave—a set of miscreants against whom popular indignation is so easily aroused that the whole party, whose terrors had now given way to wrath, moved simultaneously towards the churchyard, accompanied by the policeman, who seemed to have forgotten that it was out of his beat. It was soon discovered that the re-opened grave was that of Mrs. Allen, the poor widow who had been

buried two days before—a circumstance which tended to confirm the policeman's notion, that the resurrection-men had been at their nefarious work during the night, and quickened the advance of the party, in the hope of arresting one of those delinquents. As he heard them approach, Gale Middleton, who was too much exhausted to pronounce an articulate word, uttered a deep groan, which rather staggered the courage of the little group, and brought them to a sudden halt. One of their number, however, a poor woman, observed, that as the sound expressed suffering and exhaustion, it was much more likely to proceed from some unfortunate creature who had fallen into the grave than from any of the malefactors whom they had hoped to surprise. In almost every case of human anguish or distress, implicit reliance may be placed on the compassion of females, which is generally powerful enough to conquer their natural timidity and make them bolder than the other sex. So it proved in the present instance; for, while the men, under various pretexts, hung back and hesitated, the poor woman

here mentioned stepped forward to the edge of the grave, and, lifting up her voice and hands at the same moment, cried out — “ Lord have mercy upon us ! here’s a live man has tumbled into the grave sure enough ! ”

At this announcement the others hastened to the spot, when all stood for some minutes in a bewilderment of surprise, uttering exclamations, gazing at the prostrate body, and forming the most absurd conjectures as to the cause of the accident, instead of hastening to extricate the sufferer. The policeman betook himself to the station-house, to give information and procure assistance, and none of the others seemed disposed to venture down into the grave, until a second groan from Middleton had such an effect upon the woman who had first discovered him, that she scrambled into the pit, exclaiming — “ Why, the poor wretch will perish afore ever them policemen gets here ; so let’s try, neighbours, if we can’t hoist him up into the fresh air, and get a summat warm down his throat.” Before she set about the execution of her purpose, she removed the hat, which

still remained upon his head, and had no sooner done so, than she struck her hands together with a scream of surprise, crying out—"Christ save us all! It's the strange gentleman that was so good to my poor husband when he was down with the rheumatiz; ay, and to Widow Allen, too, whose corpse ought to be lying in this very grave, if the villainous body-snatchers haven't embezzled it away. Dear, dear!—only to think!"

Two others of the bystanders recognised the face of the benefactor to whom they had more than once been indebted, and there was now no want of active and eager assistance; for ingratitude, though sometimes urged as a plea to excuse the uncharitableness of the rich, is not the besetting sin of the poor. In a few minutes the earth had been all cleared away from Middleton's body, which was raised out of the grave, and laid upon the grass, the head being supported on the knee of the woman who had been the most strenuous of his deliverers. This kind-hearted creature, who was called Mrs. Tapps, (we like to give the names of our meri-

torious characters, especially if they be in humble life,) did not know the address of her benefactor, for, in compliance with the wishes of Lady Middleton, who hated, as she said, to have her door besieged with paupers and petitioners, her son never imparted his place of residence to the objects of his bounty. She proceeded, therefore, to search, in the hope of discovering some card or letter that might contain his address; but it was found that his pockets had been completely emptied, and the watch taken from his fob; circumstances which, in conjunction with the frightful bruise upon his forehead, convinced the bystanders that he had been assaulted and rifled by robbers who had subsequently thrown his body into the grave. As it was now obvious that nothing was to be got by waiting, and the males of the group were artisans, whose hour of morning labour had already struck, they were dispersing to their several avocations, when Mrs. Tapps requested them before they left the spot, to carry the body into the little tenement which she occupied in the immediate vicinity of the church-

yard. This was done accordingly, and the good woman, assisted by two female neighbours, who eagerly joined in discharging the offices of humanity and gratitude towards their common benefactor, laid him before the fire, covered him with blankets, and succeeded in getting some brandy down his throat, a restorative which, with the lower orders, is generally considered to be a complete panacea.

In the present instance it might almost merit that character, for it restored the faculties of their patient, who, after gazing about him with the bewilderment that generally succeeds to fainting, was at last brought to understand where he was, and the predicament in which he had been discovered. In a faint voice he gave his address, desiring to be sent home immediately; when one of his attendants ran for a hackney-coach, and Mrs. Tapps in the mean time prepared and applied a poultice to his temple, cautioning him not to speak as he had so little strength to spare, and urging him to swallow the remainder of the brandy, which, however, he declined.

On the arrival of the vehicle, a new difficulty presented itself; for the driver had no sooner caught a glimpse of his fare, than he exclaimed with a distasteful look—"When I makes a hospital of my coach, I always has double. That 'ere creetur may give my hosses the glanders, for what I know. I must have six shillings for this here job, and it must be paid beforehand."

In vain did they assure him that the sufferer was a gentleman, and that he would be paid liberally, and even gratefully, on his arrival in Portland Place: these assertions derived so little support from the appearance of the fare and the wretched aspect of the hovel whence he was to be taken, that the man prepared to drive away rather than make any diminution or compromise. It was Saturday, always the most moneyless morning of the week, and the three women could muster only two shillings among them; but in these emergencies the poor have a resource which, though often abused, is sometimes of essential service to them. Charity, it is said, blesseth the donor as well as the

receiver, and never was the dictum more strikingly verified than upon the present occasion. At the commencement of the week, Middleton had given a warm scarlet cloak to Mrs. Tappe, who now, folding it neatly up, ran with it to one of those petty pawnbrokers whose shops are opened at daybreak, that they may receive trifling deposits from the labourers and artizans who, holding it to be highly injurious to go to work with a cold stomach, must needs have wherewithal to purchase their morning dram before they commence the toil of the day.

The family were just getting up when the news of this catastrophe was communicated to them —“ Hey !—what !—hick !” cried Sir Matthew, reddening with sudden emotion ; “ Gale robbed and wounded !—dear boy ! dear boy ! Run for Dr. Hammond ! — send for Surgeon Cripps ! Where is he ? — where is he ?” With which words he ran down stairs half-dressed, and had no sooner seen his son, whose face wore a most cadaverous hue, than he burst into a mingled passion of ruth and rage, bewailing and weeping over him and cursing his savage assailants almost in the same breath.

“ I am not in the least surprised,” said Lady Middleton, in a calm voice ; “ it’s what I always told him would one day be the result of his poking into those low haunts, and seeking out objects of charity among paupers and malefactors, which are generally convertible terms. It happens at a most unfortunate moment, for I fear it will compel me to put off my party. He might have considered — but, no, Gale considers nothing.”

“ My brother robbed and wounded !” ejacu-

lated Cecilia ; " good Heavens, how shocking ! Dear Gale ! I hope he is not much hurt. Where's my dressing-gown ? I must see him instantly. How very unlucky ! I wonder whether it will put off my marriage with Sir Dennis !"

CHAPTER X.

Search, seek, and know how this foul murder comes !
Romeo and Juliet.

ALTHOUGH Sir Dennis Lifford frequently declared that punctuality was a tradesman-like and vulgar virtue, which he had never been able to accomplish, he presented himself at Portland Place rather before than after the hour appointed for his interview with Sir Matthew, who was, however, infinitely too much preoccupied with Gale's misfortune to think of anything else, or to join in a conference even upon such an important subject as a proposal of marriage for Cecilia. Fuming, fretting, bewailing, and utterly unable, in the impatience of his spirit, to remain five minutes together in the same place, he hustled from one room to another, issuing the most contradictory orders,

and endeavouring to enforce their execution sometimes by oaths and menaces, sometimes by entreaties and promises of reward. His general deportment towards his domestics was marked by a familiar good-humour, that often degenerated into coarseness; but upon the present occasion his excitement rendered him so irritable, and even violent, that the servants were almost afraid to approach him. Dupin, whom he never liked, now became the object of his especial wrath. Unable to make him comprehend his meaning, which indeed was not

particular injunctions that he should not on any account be disturbed, or spoken to, until they returned ; a most galling order for the father, who was dying with impatience to interrogate him, and learn all the particulars of his robbery, that immediate steps might be taken for discovering and punishing the delinquents. Messengers had been hastily despatched to Bow Street, and two officers were soon in attendance ; but they were obliged to be dismissed, with a request that they would return in the afternoon, very much to the annoyance of the hot and hasty Sir Matthew, who wanted, if possible, to have an instant clue to the malefactors. Could they have been brought within his grasp, he would probably have attempted to wreak upon them some prompt and fierce vengeance, for he was powerful as well as choleric ; but he was fortunately spared this temptation to a breach of the peace, and his passion, which generally subsided as rapidly as it was kindled, was already passing away, when Lady Middleton came to announce the arrival of Sir Dennis."

" Lord love'ee, Meg !" cried the husband ;
" how canst think of asking me to see him now ?
Like to lose Gale, and now this Irish Jacka-
dandy comes to take away poor dear Ciss.
Well, well ! man born to trouble as the sparks
fly upwards ! Never mind ! bad luck now,
worse another time ; misfortunes always come
single. Lose Gale, lose Ciss ! Never mind :
a small loss better than none ! O, the villains,
to hit him such a blow ! Been Sir Dennis,
now, wouldn't ha' minded : got a head like a
buffalo ; only jar your hand to pummel it with

going at night into those miserable purlieus, where he was almost sure of being robbed, even if he escaped with his life?"

"Very true, very true; head cracked before, worse cracked now—can't be helped; better no bread than half a loaf. Fool for his pains. Best armour is to keep out of gun-shot. A murrain seize the villains! Give an inch, take an ell; hey—hick! couldn't 'em take his purse without giving him such a—Tell 'ee what, if had 'm here—good heavy poker this—crack their nobs pretty considerable, as the Yankees say; warrant their sculls shouldn't ring again in a hurry." He grasped the poker till the muscles started from the back of his broad hand, clenched his teeth, drew back his lips, and breathed snortingly through his dilated nostrils, while a grim smile passed over his features, as he indulged in the contemplation of this satisfactory vengeance.

"My dear Sir Matthew!" cried the lady, "you positively frighten me; you look like the *gladiator repellens*! Surely you want not the poker to stir the fire of your wrath, for it

is hot and flaming enough already, though I see not what purpose it can answer to put yourself in such a passion?"

"Ay, ay, easy to talk ; better keep porridge to cool your breath ! My own flesh and blood, ar'n't he ? Wouldn't like to be robbed and half-murdered, would 'ee ? Ar'n't in a passion, though — wrong there ! — cool as a cucumber ! quiet as a lamb ! —hey ! —hick !"

The baronet puffed out his reddened cheeks, as if he would blow away the last remains of his choler, and was about to replace the poker,

that Dupin, ejaculating, “ Eh ! par exemple !” bolted rapidly from the apartment, making his escape with such incautious rapidity that his foot tripped in the sheepskin mat, and he rolled head-over-heels down stairs, with no inconsiderable clatter and outcry, being accompanied in his descent by the coffee-tray and its contents !

“ There he goes !” cried his delighted master, throwing down the poker and snapping his fingers in an ecstasy — “ Bumpity bump ! bumpity bump ! Hope he won’t stop at the landing-place — no — off again ! All stone steps ! — there he is, landed in the hall, and well soused, I hope, with scalding coffee ! Capital ! capital !—hick, hick, hick !—ha, ha, ha !” And even in the midst of his uproarious laughter the baronet continued snapping his fingers.

Lady Middleton hastened to see whether any injury had been sustained by her favourite domestic, who had, however, escaped for the fright and a few bruises ; while Sir Matthew, shocked at the loud and hearty laugh into

which he had been involuntarily betrayed, suddenly recovered his gravity, muttering in a tone of self-reproach, “What an unnatural beast I am ! None but a pelican would laugh and snap its fingers in this way when its own child lying in the house half-dead. Poor dear Gale ! — hope he has broke his bones — mean the rascally Frenchman — bumpity bump ! hick ! Ha ! carriage stopped ! Perhaps Dr. Hammond — hey ! No ; only the jackadandy Irishman’s cab driving up — come to take him away, I hope — want no visitors now.”

“ Ah, now ! I was in hopes it was Sir Matthew !” cried Sir Dennis Lifford as Lady Middleton re-entered the drawing-room. “ Isn’t it the first time in my life I was ever punctual, and haven’t I been waiting half an hour just for nothing at all ?”

“ Sir Matthew may well stand excused for a little impunctuality, considering the catastrophe that has happened in our family,” said Lady Middleton, whose smile betrayed her to be somewhat offended.

“ ‘Faith ! then, as I hope to be saved, I had

forgotten all about it. And how is he, the poor boy? Is it only a broken head he has got? Ah, then, he 'll do mighty well!"

"Strange enough, Sir Dennis, that you should forget the accident almost as soon as you learnt it."

"It's such a mons'ous bore recollecting things, now is'nt it? And sure wasn't I talking all the while with Miss Middleton, which is enough to drive everything clean out of a man's head?"

"I fear you have found me a very stupid companion," said Cecilia, "for I have been thinking too much of poor Gale to keep up a conversation. It's very cruel that they will not allow us to see him."

"Should he be better in the afternoon I dare say the prohibition will be removed; and if Sir Dennis will do us the favour of returning about three o'clock, Sir Mathew will then be able to meet and confer with him. At present he is too much agitated to see anybody, or to discourse rationally upon any subject, though that is not very unusual."

" Is it three o'clock you said, Lady Middleton? Ah now, don't say three; sure I've an engagement for that same?"

" Is it of so urgent a nature that you cannot defer it?"

" Indeed is it, for I promised to meet Lord Arthur Fintown to see two wooden-legged sailors run a race, whom we have match'd for twenty guineas a side. It will be uncawmonly rideeculous—mons' ous amusing; each fellow has two wooden legs, so that if he falls, devil a bit will he be able to get up again. I give you my honour it will be an elegant match." The baronet humming an air, sauntered up to the mirror, and proceeded to arrange his whiskers, hair, and cravat, with as much nonchalance as if he were making his toilet at home; while Cecilia, unable to conceal her displeasure that a race of wooden legged sailors should be deemed of more consequence than an interview with her father upon so interesting a subject as her marriage, turned to a table, and began pouting over a book, which however, she was too much ruffled to read. " My dear child," whispered

Lady Middleton, who perceived that she had lost her habitual equanimity, “you must reconcile yourself to these little *étourderies*, for which young men of distinguished fashion and elegance are allowed a *carte blanche*. They are privileged persons, and their deviation from the ordinary *bienfaçances de la société* is only a proof that they belong to the *haut ton*. You would not have Sir Dennis as formal and servile as that horrid prig, Caleb Ball, or as timidly polite and deferential as your beau of Broad Street Buildings—Ned Travers?”

“O no, certainly,” replied Cecilia, who wished to show a proper appreciation of everything fashionable, though she was by no means reconciled to her lover’s apparent indifference. “At five o’clock then, I ’ll be here as sure as fate,” said Sir Dennis, lounging back from the mirror—“and I hope we ’ll soon arrange everything with Sir Matthew, for indeed now, Miss Middleton—” and here he looked particularly tender, “wont I be miserable till all is settled, and the happy day arrives? Faith then, to tell you the truth, I ’m a very extror’nary fellow;

never was such an indolent creature till once my mind is made up, and then I'm altogether just as impatient. So that I hope—ah now, that's a beautiful head-dress of yours; I give you my honour you are *coiffée comme un ange*, as Dupin would say. What was I talking of? Oh then, I remember, and that's a wonder. I was hoping you would be prevailed upon to name a very early day, for I must be at Paris to keep my appointment if I possibly can."

"All this can be explained to Sir Matthew this afternoon," said Lady Middleton.

"Faith, and that's very true, and so, *au revoir!*!" cried the baronet, lounging out of the room.

Scarcely had he been five minutes gone when Mrs. Burroughs bustled into the apartment without being announced, exclaiming as she entered, "A thousand pardons, Lady Middleton! they told me you had desired to be denied to everybody except Sir Dennis, who I see, is just departed; but I was sure you would make an exception in favour of such a particular

friend ; so I ran past the servants, and ushered myself into your presence *sans ceremonie*. How do, Ciss ?

“ Besides, I come upon business. What a shocking occurrence ! quite dreadful ! I was completely overcome when I heard it ; thought I should have fainted ; but I desired Dominick to run directly to Bow Street. You ’ll do nothing without Dominick, he knows some of the policemen and the officers, and he is now gone to the church-yard where Gale was found, to make enquiries and procure evidence and all that, for he never minds what trouble he takes for a friend.”

“ You seem to know more of this strange and unlucky affair than I do myself,” said Lady Middleton, coldly. “ I was not even aware that Gale had been found in a church-yard.”

“ O dear yes, an obscure place in the neighbourhood of Petty France. On his way back from Dr. Hammond’s, Dupin called and told me all about it. How could you think of sending for Hammond, or Cripps either ? Blenkinsop

is the only man in London for wounds in the head, so I took the liberty of desiring him to call. It was he, you know, who trepanned—”

“ I have no doubt of his skill in trepanning,” interposed Lady Middleton, “ but he cannot possibly be admitted now that Gale is in other hands.”

“ What a pity ! such a clever man ! but it’s of no consequence ; you can give him his fee, and explain that he need not return. But I must run away ; I know you are all in confusion, and don’t want to see company, though I

some sort, however trifling, when she hurried out of the room. No sooner was the door shut than Lady Middleton exclaimed, "I will take good care that she shall not be readmitted in the afternoon; really, this woman's officiousness and intrusion becomes quite impertinent. Give Blenkinsop a fee! Indeed I shall do no such thing. I must check this offensive forwardness."

"She may err in judgment," observed Cecilia, "but I believe her intentions to be good and friendly, and we have certainly been indebted to her kindness."

"What! in introducing Sir Dennis? true; she is a useful person, but she requires to be kept at a little distance, or she would turn us out of our own houses. I know she patronises Mr. Blenkinsop, but that is no reason why I should give him a fee for nothing."

When the medical attendants revisited their patient in the afternoon they pronounced that no immediate or ultimate danger was to be apprehended from the injuries inflicted upon him, although it was probable that a considerable time might elapse before he would be entirely

re-established. From the wandering nature of his discourse in the first instance they had been inclined to fear that the blow had produced some concussion of the brain, but, as he was perfectly collected upon their second visit, they changed their opinion, and seemed to think he would sustain longer and more serious inconvenience from the consequences of the cold to which he had been exposed, than from the wound in his head. Tranquillity and avoidance of all excitement they still considered essential ; although, in consideration of the urgency

easier to make than to enforce, although it was submitted with all the plausible and persuasive arguments that the Doctor, speaking in his softest voice, could adduce. "Humbug!" cried the indignant father, "all flummery and palaver! Never consent when a fellow speaks so softly to me. Giving fair words is feeding with empty spoon. My own flesh and blood, arn't he? What! let those thief-takers into the room, stay there yourself, and shut out his own father! Deuce a bit. Arn't going to be made a fool in my own house; those don't like it may lump it. Perhaps I may be more use than all of 'ee, and give a better guess at the truth. Little ears have long pitchers; old fox understands trap!—hey!—hick!"

As it was quite evident from the baronet's manner that he had made up his mind, and was neither to be dissuaded nor commanded from his purpose, he was suffered to enter the room with the officers, a promise being previously exacted that he would not remain long, and would avoid all discourse or demeanour that might unnecessarily agitate his son — pledges

which were soon given and as quickly forgotten. Unaccustomed to restrain his feelings, he had no sooner caught sight of Gale, than running up to his bed-side, and, seizing the hand that was extended towards him, he wrung it with a nervous grasp, ejaculating — “ Lord love ‘ee, my poor boy ! thee lookest desperate ill — white as ashes — how goes it with ‘ee ? — how ‘s head ? . Here’s the doctor, and the chaps from Bow Street, come to ask ‘ee about it. Rascals ! I hope to see ‘em all swinging by the neck—mean the robbers. Only wish I had ‘em here—that ‘s all.”

The physician, now interposing, requested his patient to communicate, with as little exertion as possible, any particulars which he might think likely to identify his assailants and lead to their apprehension ; in compliance with which invitation Gale succinctly stated the circumstances of his robbery, describing the appearance of the thieves, and adding that one of them was called Gentleman Joe. This offender, it appeared, was not unknown to the officers, who however did not express any very confident

expectation of discovering and securing him, as he was what they termed a "shy bird" and a "Levanter," that is to say, a person who makes only occasional visits to London, absconding after any successful enterprise to various parts of England or Ireland, and even occasionally crossing over to the Continent. Gale declared that he could not recall any other name, except that he had caught the words "as safe as Drummond," and had heard one of the fellows observe that Oliver was not in town.

At this observation the two police-officers, looking at each other with a derisive smile, found it impossible to refrain from laughing, for which the senior apologized by saying, as he smoothed down the hair upon his forehead—"Ask your pardon, sir; hope no offence; only we thought every body in the world knew that 'safe as Drummond' meant as good as the Bank; and that Oliver's not being in town signified that there was no moon."

Admitting his utter ignorance of the slang language, Gale proceeded to recount, as well as he could collect its meaning, the conversation

of the robbers, whence it appeared that they had been expressly hired by some secret and mortal enemy to assassinate him ; and then related all that had occurred until he had become finally insensible, and had been conveyed, he knew not how, to the churchyard; and thrown into the grave where he had been so fortunately discovered. During this statement, Sir Matthew, utterly unable to sit still, had stalked up and down the room, muttering half-suppressed execrations, grinding his teeth, clenching his fists, and looking about with a restless eye and angry

part of the morning, but without being enabled to form even a guess as to my secret foe. I knew not that I had an enemy in existence; that I should have one so deadly and atrocious as thus to practise against my life I can hardly believe, in spite of the evidence of my senses. And yet there can scarcely be a mistake, for I was distinctly asked whether my name were Gale Middleton, before I was attacked. Some mortal and remorseless enemy I must therefore have. Whoever he may be, may God forgive him as freely as I do! I am utterly unconscious of any offence; I have never done harm to any man."

" Dear boy! kind-hearted boy! no more thee hast," cried the father, who had again seated himself by his side, and taken his hand; " ready to take my Bible oath on't; wouldn't hurt a worm; too kind, too forgiving, by half; too — Oh, Doctor Hammond! thee doesn't know what a generous — never was such a — isn't it a burning shame, now, that such an affectionate, such a good—" Overcome by an irrepressible tenderness, the baronet, who

found that the words stuck in his throat, dashed away a tear with the back of his hand, swallowed down the rising emotion, and throwing himself into a passion in order to conceal his melting mood, exclaimed — “ Tell ‘ee what, Gale ! never forgive ‘ee if ‘ee bid God forgive the scoundrel that broke thy head. Forgive him after he’s hung — time enough then : as good a Christian as other folks—bear no grudge when fellow’s dead. Bloodthirsty rascal—hey ! — hick ! ”

In vain did he attempt to give a firm and

cers to withdraw from the apartment, which they did accordingly, while he himself, taking the arm of the silent and unresisting Sir Matthew, led him back to the drawing-room, repeating his injunctions that his patient, who would probably fall asleep after the exertion he had made, should be kept as quiet as possible. As he was leaving the house the baronet put a bank-note into his hand, observing that he might not be always in the way when he called, and beseeching him to be unremitting in his attentions to his son — “ My dear Sir Matthew,” said the Doctor, “ I really ought not to accept such an inordinate fee, for I hope my attendance will not long be required.”

“ Never mind, stick to him the closer while you do come. Money makes the mare to go. Can’t live upon fine words. Thank ye, good puss, starved my cat. Make a short job on’t, and welcome to as much more. Ar’n’t he my own flesh and blood? — hey! — hick !”

In his injudicious anxiety to enforce the physician’s orders, the kind-hearted baronet was himself the first to violate them. Unac-

customed to idleness, and unable to think of anything but his sick son, he fidgeted about the house, forbidding the servants to speak or move, listening at the bed-room door, and even sallying forth into the street to silence the clamorous hawkers who happened to be passing, an object in which he could not always succeed without an altercation productive of much more noise than that which he sought to suppress. When Sir Dennis, who was once more punctual to the appointed hour, returned to Portland Place, Sir Matthew positively refused to see

and refreshing slumber, and was sufficiently recruited to enquire with some eagerness when he awoke what refreshments he was allowed to take. "Ha!" cried the baronet, rubbing his hands — "feel empty in the bread-basket? Good sign—good sign: do famously when 'ee begin to eat and drink;" and he forthwith rendered a bustling and officious assistance to the nurse in preparing such slops as she had been directed to administer, expressing no small regret at their unsubstantial and unsatisfactory nature. "Look'ee, dear boy," he exclaimed, after having sent the nurse out of the room, "want to talk to 'ee a-bit; 'twon't hurt'ee now, after swallowing all that gruel, though 'tis but wishy-washy stuff. Been thinking of what Dr. Hammond said: must have an enemy somewhere. No use nabbing the fellow that broke 'ee head, if can't get hold of chap that hired him. Got an idea of my own—no fool, though can't jabber Latin: an ounce mother-wit worth a pound of learning, hey!—hick! Taken it into my head this rascally attack has something to do with that love affair of your's at Cambridge.

Understand there was a quarrel and angry words."

" My dear sir," interposed Gale, evidently pained by this allusion, " it is quite impossible that there can be any connexion whatever between the two occurrences ; and I must entreat you not to recal an affair, to which, as you are well aware, I can never listen without great anguish of mind."

" Why so plaguy silent always about it ?—Close as wax—wince and turn pale if I drop a word upon the subject. Mayhap I may think different from you : two heads better than one.

me : they owe me gratitude, not hatred, and still less revenge."

"Gratitude ! then what did'ee quarrel about so fiercely ?"

"It grieves me that I cannot reply to your questions, but my lips are sealed."

"Been told a parcel of lies that'ee behaved ill in that business : fudge ! don't believe a word on 't."

"I feel grateful for your confidence in my rectitude and honour," said the son, who would not suffer his secret to be extorted from him even in defending his character ; "and I can declare with a safe conscience that my conduct on that occasion does not deserve the malevolent censures with which it has been sometimes assailed. As they spring from the ignorance of disappointed curiosity, they have my contempt and my forgiveness.—"

"And you feel perfectly satisfied that the individuals with whom you quarrelled at Cambridge cannot be concerned with these murderous rascals in London ?"

"Of this I entertain an assured and absolute conviction."

....., like shooting without

"I have not spoken witho-
tion ; my opinion is delibera-
and you will therefore much
again referring to an event
which only serves to fill my m-
distressing reflections."

"Mum's the word then,
wouldn't hurt'ee for the world
within my tongue as well as
deaf as those that can't hear ;
der !—hey—hick!"

CHAPTER XI.

— Why, who cries out on pride
That can therein tax any private party?
Doth it not flow as hugely as the sea,
Till that the very means do ebb?
Who can come in and say that I mean her.
When such a one as she, such is her neighbour,
Or what is he of basest function,
Thinking that I mean him, but therein suits
His folly to the metal of my speech?

SHAKSPEARE.

LATE in the evening Sir Matthew had a visit from the indefatigable Mr. Dominick Burroughs, who came to report the result of his enquiries. This practitioner was a good lawyer in the worst acceptation of the term; in other words he was a pettifogger, who flourished and supported himself like ivy, by finding out flaws, holes, and defects, into which he might insinu-

ate his footstalks, and by that means climb upwards. Quirks, quiddits, and technicalities, might be said to supply him a house, since he was perfectly at home in them : for a knavish client, who wished to defeat the ends of justice by availing himself of the forms and subtleties of law, he was an admirable instrument : sharp and astute, he was not less quick in detecting than unceremonious in seizing every advantage that might benefit his employer ; but this was the utmost extent of his abilities. The cunning fox, or the crafty weasel, however well

vided with this convenient plea,) our lawyer, who always had an eye to his bill, and thought more of himself than of his client, had examined and taken depositions from all the parties who knew anything, and from some who knew nothing of the affair, which, without any instructions to that effect, he had undertaken to investigate. Even the young chimney-sweeps had been ferreted out and interrogated ; Mrs. Tapps and her neighbours had undergone strict examination ; Widow Allen's hovel had been visited and inspected ; the dwellers in that forlorn vicinity had been questioned and sifted ; nothing in short had been neglected which could bring profit to the solicitor, and yet very little had been discovered or elicited that could give satisfaction to his employer, or dissipate the profound mystery in which the affair still remained involved. Burroughs himself, as well as the police-officers who assisted him in his researches, had at first imagined Gale to have been assaulted by some of the miscreants whose murders and atrocities, for supplying subjects of dissection for the hospitals, have on several oc-

casions excited such a profound horror in the metropolis : but, had this been the case, instead of throwing his body into a grave, where they had evidently intended to inter it, they would have concealed it in some of the receptacles provided for that purpose, until it suited them to strip and convey it away for sale. That the grave of Widow Allen, who had only been buried two days, had been opened for the sake of this nefarious traffic seemed scarcely to admit a doubt ; and yet upon examination the corpse was found undisturbed, nor did any attempts appear to have been made to unscrew

Mr. Burroughs was proceeding to recapitulate to Sir Matthew, with as much circumlocution as if he were to be paid by the word, were at once overthrown by the statement of the sufferer, that he had been the victim of a foul conspiracy against his life, originating with some unknown enemy, by whom his assailants had been hired. Here was a fresh clue and fresh business for the man of law, who noted down all the particulars, expressing a confident hope, especially as one of the culprits was known to the police, that some or all of them would speedily be apprehended, when there could be no doubt that they would gladly screen themselves by giving up the name of the villain who had set them on. To accomplish this object Sir Matthew eagerly declared himself willing to incur any expense, a declaration very acceptable to his auditor, who, having now got the business into his own hands, took his leave, with a full determination to make the most of so rich and liberal a client.

At the very moment when the parties were thus conferring in Portland Place, Gale's mis-

fortune formed the subject of conversation at the dinner-table of the Duke of Harrowgate in May Fair. This wealthy nobleman had unfortunately received his education under all the errors and prejudices of the old school, which held in special abhorrence every liberal idea, maintained as an article of faith the "right divine of kings to govern wrong!" inculcated passive obedience to pastors and masters in all matters relating to church and state, and asserted in its utmost latitude the comfortable doctrine of the many being made for the few. So far from shaking off, or even modifying, as he grew older, any of these exploded dogmas, and adapting himself to the more enlightened spirit of the age, the Duke, who, like most of his class, was exceedingly indolent, and thought it very hard that he should learn a new lesson after he was grown up, contented himself with clinging the more closely to his original small stock of narrow ideas, considering them the best distinction of the best portion of the aristocracy. For his wounded pride and mental deficiency, which he could not altogether con-

ceal, even from himself, he found a solace in extolling the good old times, while he stigmatised all those who had advanced with the march of intellect and left him behind as revolutionists, radicals, and incendiaries. So far as a naturally feeble mind, wrong-directed from its infancy, can be said to possess any character at all, that of the Duke may be summed up in a very few words : inert, bigoted, and illiberal, he had an overweening notion of his own importance, and that of the aristocracy, a general contempt for the rest of the community, and a special hatred of all those innovators who presumed to doubt that whatever is is right. And yet he was often pointed out as one of those who conferred honour upon his honours. Moral and domestic, he was admitted by all parties to be a kind-hearted and generous man wherever that decided political bias, which is always strong in proportion to the weakness of the intellect, did not warp him from his natural amiability.

It has been observed, that a husband and wife, by living together for a series of years,

often undergo a certain process of external assimilation, a theory which may perhaps be merely fanciful, so far as regards personal appearance, but which, when applied to the minds of the parties, will be frequently confirmed by the most careless observation. Born in the same class, possessing congenially negative faculties, and passing the greater part of her time in his society, for they were a very domestic couple, considering their high rank, it is little wonderful that the character of the Duchess should resemble that of the Duke. In

of thinking soon became a burthen, to escape from which they received into the house, in the capacity of humble companion to the Duchess, a Miss Borradaile, a very talented person, as the phrase goes, whose duty it was to inform her patrons of what was passing in the world, to read the newspapers to them, to acquaint them with the heads of such books as attained any temporary popularity, to answer questions, and give information of all sorts, and in fact to perform the part of a walking encyclopædia.

As a relief from the ennui naturally engendered by this bodily and mental inertness, the Duchess, whose high birth and unimpeached character formed her sole qualifications for the office, undertook to become a leader among the female exclusives, all the trouble of which devolved upon Miss Borradaile, while her Grace was flattered by the patronage and importance that accrued, with little or no exertion, to herself. Why so rigid a dictatress of the *haut ton* should condescend to sanction a party at the house of a city baronet in Portland Place may require some explanation. None but those

who have unfortunately basked in the smiles of fortune, until every wish has been gratified even to satiety and surfeit, can fully appreciate the misery that sometimes springs from the want of a want. Sick of the world, because it had nothing more to give her, and of herself because she had nothing to do or to think of, the Duchess endeavoured to excite her stagnant mind by frequent changes of scene and society, travelling from one country-house to another, and from each to London, in the vain hope of being enabled to escape from herself. The

"Impossible, my dear Lady Barbara. Many years ago her father was enabled to render some service to the Duke, who is such a kind-hearted creature that he would never consent to her being *congédiée* without assigning some more satisfactory cause."

"Well, then, marry her off, which would settle the affair in a manner equally pleasant and honourable to all parties."

"Very true; but where shall we find a husband for a person of humble birth, who is neither young nor handsome, who has no fortune, wears spectacles, and, in spite of all her talents and acquirements, has few of those accomplishments which are usually looked for in a wife?"

"Crown me, Duchess, with an orange flower-garland!" exclaimed Lady Barbara, after a moment's consideration; "I have it—I have it! I know the very man who, if marriages be made in heaven, must have been destined for her in the paradise of fools. It is the only son of Sir Matthew Middleton, a wealthy baronet."

"Would a young man of such expectations select —?"

"Yes, if like loves like, for he is a quiz, an oddity, a bookworm, a lover of chemistry and of everything that is abstruse, in short, he is half crazy; the very man who would prefer a wife that wore spectacles, and only regret that they were not green. Besides, he sets up for a philosopher, and would pique himself upon despising everything that another would admire in a wife."

"Nay, if he is a philosopher, there can be no great trouble in making a fool of him. You really give me hopes; and if you can accom-

she had been expressly commissioned to offer. Such conduct might have been deemed hardly honourable, even by Lady Barbara herself, but that she felt bound in honour to pay certain debts that ought to have been long since discharged : a miserable subterfuge, which she would have laughed to scorn in another, but which, so ingenious are we in self-deception, she contrived to fashion into a flattering unction for her own soul.

At the dinner-table of the Duke, when the attack upon Gale Middleton formed the prevalent subject of conversation, there were present, besides Lady Barbara and two or three other friends, a briefless barrister known by the name of Tom Rashleigh, a man of obscure birth, little fortune, and few personal recommendations, who had wormed or bullied his way into the very first circles by a reputation for small wit, as exemplified in puns, epigrams, and satirical compositions ; but more especially by his known connexion with certain scandal-dealing journals which make weekly attacks, often pushed to the most unbounded licentiousness,

upon those of either sex and of every rank that incur their displeasure. The wielder of such a formidable, though unjustifiable, means of annoyance, was naturally hated—but he was feared still more; and such was the moral cowardice of some of the high and titled exclusives, grounded perhaps on a knowledge of their own vulnerable points, that they not only admitted Tom Rashleigh into their penetralia, but sought to propitiate his favour, or at least to blunt the shafts of his malice, by the most fulsome flattery and undisguised homage. Despising a

After earth, sea, and sky have been in vain ransacked for new delicacies, nothing remains but to amuse the eye and tempt the jaded appetite by compounding and disguising the old materials, until the banquet becomes a masquerade, which perpetually recalls the first line of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Fish, flesh, and fowl, were made to change appearances with each other, many an old friend losing under his new face every thing that had once recommended him to the palate ; vegetables were carved into flowers, birds, and beasts ; and the pastry was manipulated into a thousand forms, animate and inanimate. Nothing, in short, was what it appeared to be ; and, consequently, everything was what it ought not to be. A servant had been stationed behind each chair, to whisk away the plate of those who did not vigilantly guard it ; while others incessantly worried the guests by offering enigmatical dishes, which many could not comprehend, and therefore feared to touch. These officious tormentors were now diminished to three, two being occupied at the beginning of the dessert

in removing the opal ice-plates, while a third perambulated the apartment with incense in a silver chafing-dish, in order to dissipate the fumes of dinner.

"A very shocking story, Lady Barbara!" said the Duke; "to knock down and rob the young gentleman — a commoner, I think you said, of the name of Middleton — was wrong, very wrong; but to attempt to bury him, even if he had been dead, without reading the service over his body, without benefit of clergy, as I may say, was a most atrocious, diabolical,

they ought to be condignly punished. Such conduct is equally wanton and wicked, for surely they might procure bodies enough among the lower orders to answer all the demands of the dissectors."

"A very profound and a very just remark," cried Rashleigh, with a mock gravity: "they might, and they ought; and whoever acts otherwise, whether body-snatcher or surgeon, is encroaching upon my manor, since I claim the exclusive right of digging up, showing up, and cutting up, all the higher classes."

"O, you horrid creature!" cried Lady Barbara; "but then you are so honourable and good-tempered, that you never think of inflicting a wound upon a friend."

"Or if he does," said the Duchess, "his wit is so keen, and so highly polished, and its edge, in consequence, so little felt, that even the patient may admire the inimitable skill and beauty of the operation."

"Would your Grace wish me to furnish you with a subject of admiration?"

"Out upon you! — no. You would not think of attacking me, I am a friend."

"And so am I," cried Lady Barbara, eagerly, "and one of the warmest admirers of your admirable *jeux d'esprit*."

"That is fortunate, for with such friends I may take the liberty which with a stranger would have been hardly justifiable. Besides, I am furnished with so many and such irresistible subjects, by knowing all your sore places and weak points."

The exclamations of the ladies were drowned

the flattest common-place or the gravest truism, provided it be uttered by a reputed wag.

"There is one reform," resumed the Duke, "of which we hear nothing; and yet it appears to me more necessary than any other. As there is a great indecorum, to say nothing of the levelling principle it so jacobinically involves, in burying the aristocracy among plebeians, and subjecting them to the same chance of disinterment, I would propose that the nobility and the dignified clergy should have a cemetery of their own, at which a guard of soldiers should be stationed night and day."

"I doubt whether such a reform would prevent corruption," said Rashleigh, whose remark provoked the usual cachinnation; "though I must admit that there is something grand, original, and every way worthy of your Grace, in the idea of having a cemeterial House of Lords, a sepulchral Almack's, an exclusive charnel-house for the nobility, and special vaultage for the bench of bishops. But even thus, I doubt whether the worms of your burial-ground could be entirely banqueted upon patricians, for you

might inter in it occasionally the children of peeresses who were not the offspring of peers."

"I bar all scandal," cried the Duchess.

"Then you must make your peace with the rest of your sex for condemning them to silence. Do you remember, Duke, the story told by Quevedo in his 'Visions?' — A Spanish nobleman's coachman, astonished at meeting his master in purgatory, enquired with great respect and commiseration, what could possibly have condemned so good a Catholic to so ugly a place. — 'O Pedro, Pedro!' was the reply,

vedo?" asked the Duchess, in hopes of turning the conversation from a subject which was evidently unpalatable to Lady Barbara.

"Quevedo, madam, was a Spanish satirist, and a knight of St. James, born, I believe, somewhere about the year 1570," replied Miss Borradaile, who seldom spoke, except in answer to an interrogatory, and never confessed ignorance upon any subject, since she had been engaged as an *Encyclopédie parlante*, and was tolerably sure that if she committed a mistake, it would rarely be detected.

"The rogue, you see, was a satirist, like myself," said Rashleigh.

"Not altogether, for he appears to have been a person of quality," observed the Duke, not sorry to gird at his plebeian guest.

"He wrote so well, that I always took him for a commoner," resumed Rashleigh. To return, however, to your idea of an aristocratical cemetery, it is not so original as I had at first imagined, for the ancient Egyptians had exclusive burial-places of this nature, and the bodies of the old Theban nobility, converted

up and sold for that purpose chaldron. Whatever might living character, none can de mous merits, since they are to lighten the lower classes, to around them, and to assist in p for the hungry and the poor ; a our modern aristocracy would low."

" No imputation can attach Peage ; they are altogether a admirable body of men—ver very ! !!" —exclaimed the Duke, strength and emphasis by whic cealed from himself, and someti the weakness of his ideas and th language.

" My dear Duke,"

moner, and you have wandered to the merits of the English aristocracy."

"A very wide digression, madam, it must be admitted—very, very! I have not the honour of knowing the gentleman in question, the son, I think you said of a city baronet, notwithstanding which he may be, and I dare say is, a very respectable person."

"He is a young man of great talent," continued the Duchess, "who was much distinguished at college, and whose various attainments and amiable disposition are the theme of general admiration. You would be delighted with him, Miss Borradaile, for his pursuits have in many respects been congenial with your own, and I hope to make you soon acquainted with each other. He declares that the blue-stocking females, whom the ignorant and the coxcombical of his own sex affect to dislike, constitute the only class from which he would choose to select a wife."

Miss Borradaile pushed her spectacles nearer to her eyes, and looked at the speaker with an air of great interest and profound attention.

"I only fear," resumed the Duchess, "that his unfortunate accident may prevent, or at least defer, the opportunity of making his acquaintance, for I had intended to patronise a musical party at Lady Middleton's house."

"What, madam!" cried the peer, "did I correctly catch your words? Is it fitting, I would ask, that the wife of the Duke of Harrowgate should visit the wife of a city baronet? a title, by the bye, which, however humble, ought not to be degraded by being bestowed on such inferior characters. Is he a person of any
height?"

that is involve—in short it is altogether shocking and improper; highly so—very highly so."

" My dear Duke, *laissez moi faire*; this is in my department, not yours, and I doubt not that when you know my motives, you yourself will approve my conduct."

" I hope so, madam. If you should ever be tempted, in the choice of your visiting acquaintance, to forget what is due to yourself, I trust you will always recollect that you are the wife of the Duke of Harrowgate. At present I cannot discuss this matter, for I must hasten down to the House to oppose these new and most dangerous measures that threaten to overturn all the most ancient and therefore the best institutions of the country. What the people can possibly want is to me utterly amazing. How can they be better off or more comfortable? Have they not already all that they could wish for? To complain under such circumstances is abominable, and indeed wrong—very, very, very!" So saying the hereditary legislator tossed off a final bumper of Burgundy, enveloped himself in a wadded silk

roquelaure, was helped by three or four servants into his padded, well-poised carriage, and drove to the House, to express his unqualified opinion that things were perfectly well as they were, and that none but radicals, revolutionists, and incendiaries, would think of complaining.

"Duchess ! I take the liberty of inviting myself beforehand to the party at Lady Middleton's," said Rashleigh, "for your grace will of course name the guests, and I think it will afford sport to see the fashionables in the house of a city baronet in Portland Place. Fish more

have absolute authority over them, both for insertion and omission."

Aware of the great power he derived from this general belief, which while it occasioned his exclusion from the houses of the resolute, the manly, and the upright, procured him all sorts of favours from the timid, the thin-skinned, and those whose reputation would not bear handling, Rashleigh met the charge with that species of coy and evasive denial which confirms what it affects to contradict, while he avoided any admission that might involve him in legal proceedings or personal altercation. "If I really possessed," said he, "the power which you are pleased to impute to me, I should consider myself a most useful public character, inasmuch as I should be the only moralist having the means to make himself feared or even heard. If I could really persuade my acquaintance that—

‘ Whoe'er offends at some unlucky time,
Slides in a verse or hitches in a rhyme,
Sacred to ridicule his whole life long,
And the sad burthen of some merry song;’

should I not be the means of keeping them on
their good behaviour better than all the sermons,
laws, and magistrates, in existence? And if I
should succeed in thus enforcing even an exter-
nal homage to virtue and religion might I not
justly exclaim with the bard

'Yes, I confess that I am proud to see
Men not afraid of God afraid of me,
Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
And shamed and awed by ridicule alone.'

Such are the high and useful objects that jus-
tify the severity of the satirist."

feel obliged to everybody! Ladies, we are getting personal, so we had better separate. I promised to look in at half-a-dozen places tonight."

"But we part friends," said the Duchess and her companion, each holding out her hand.

"The best on earth, I swear it, and thus do I kiss the book." With an air of mock gallantry he pressed each hand to his lip, hurried home, and composed a biting lampoon upon Lady Barbara, whose character laid her somewhat open to these attacks, not forgetting to throw in several jibing allusions to her friend the Duchess. It might have been thought that the ladies anticipated his purpose, for his back was no sooner turned, than they not only vituperated him as a treacherous and malevolent libeller, but even denied the talents on which they had so recently been pronouncing the highest and most fulsome eulogy.

CHAPTER XII.

God made the country, and man made the town ;
What wonder, then, that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound,
And least be threaten'd in the fields and groves ?

COWPER.

GALE MIDDLETON, having enjoyed several hours refreshing sleep, found himself so much better on the following morning, that he was allowed to have an interview with his cousin, Caleb Ball, who had been in attendance from a very early hour, and who, upon his admission into the sick-room, evinced a tenderness and sympathy with the patient which could hardly have been expected from his cold, phlegmatic temperament. Even now his leaden countenance, which seemed to be altogether incapable of emotion, did not vary, but his verbal ex-

pressions testified a deep interest in the state of the patient, and his indignation against his assailants was loud and vehement, in spite of the immobility of his features. After making the most minute inquiries into all the circumstances of the case, and taking notes in his pocket-book of what he heard, particularly as to the personal description of Gentleman Joe and the other robbers, he volunteered to assist Mr. Burroughs in his investigations, or to accompany the Bow Street officers, who would be stimulated, he said, to a more active discharge of their duty if they had a monitor at their elbow, to prompt them when they were remiss, or to hold out the promise of a recompence for the zealous discharge of their duty.

"I have seen a good deal of these men," said Caleb; "first, when our book-keeper decamped with a considerable sum of money, and upon a subsequent occasion, when our warehouses were robbed of some valuable goods, and I have no great confidence in their exertions, unless where they are incited by the hope of reward. By this method also, even if the

police fail in discovering the offenders, there is every probability that one of their own body may turn king's evidence. Almost incredible as is the fact, it is manifest that you have some secret enemy, bitter and atrocious enough to practise against your life. He may repeat the horrible attempt in which he has now been foiled, and as money, in a case like this, is no object whatever, I should counsel Sir Matthew to offer a reward of five hundred, or even a thousand pounds at once, were I not deterred by one weighty apprehension —”

the criminals. Even the Bow Street officers themselves have not been always free from the imputation of a similar crime, in cases where the blood-money, as it has been so truly termed, only amounted to the paltry sum of forty pounds!"

"God forbid that I should be the means of exposing a fellow-creature to the remotest chance of such a horrible doom! Were anything of this sort to occur, and to become known to me, I should be miserable for the whole remainder of my life!"

"I am sure you would, my dear Gale, and it would therefore hardly be safe to offer any such inordinate sum as might tempt to the commission of this enormity; but I will consult Sir Matthew on the subject."

"Let nothing be done without my concurrence. One crime need not generate another, and I will have no additional temptations to perjury and murder thrown in the way of the unprincipled and the needy. If my secret enemy can be discovered by the ordinary processes of the law, let him be dragged to light,

and exposed to whatever fate he may merit; if not, let him for the present escape. As for myself, I am indifferent upon the subject, and had rather be the object than the cherisher of a malice which is as unprovoked as it is deadly."

" This it is that puzzles us all, my dear Gale. Your whole life, at least since you came home from college, has been passed in conferring benefits, which ought to have secured you troops of friends without creating a single enemy. It is not in London, therefore, that you must look for your foe. Upon that mysterious quarrel at Cambridge, of which we have all heard, though we none of us know the particulars, I will not interrogate you, since I am well aware that you wish to bury the whole transaction in profound oblivion; but, as you may rest assured, that it has some connection with this infamous attack upon your life, it is for yourself to determine whether you will still preserve so unaccountable a silence?"

" You are utterly mistaken in your surmises, and I must request, as I already have of

Sir Matthew, that you will *never, never* make any allusion to a subject which is so painful, I may say so revolting, to me. You cannot more highly disoblige me than by disobeying this injunction!"

" You may command our silence, but you cannot prevent our suspicions. *That was* the only quarrel in which you were ever known to be concerned ; but I see that I distress you, and I will say no more ; others, however, may be less scrupulous, and that you may escape from all the annoyances and vexatious inquiries to which you are sure to be exposed, I should strenuously advise your withdrawing from London as soon as you have recovered sufficient strength to be moved. Tranquillity, seclusion, and the good air of Brookshaw Lodge, will do more for you in a week than can be accomplished by all the London physicians in a month."

" I believe it ; I am sure of it ; nor can you be more anxious to urge than I am to adopt the recommendation. Nothing but the earnest request of my father could have torn me from

my favourite Brookshaw, for an early return to which I have ever since been yearning with my whole heart."

"Is it the Lodge, or Maple Hatch and the philosophical Chritty Norberry, of whom I myself am something of an admirer, that —"

"You, Caleb! you an admirer of Miss Norberry!" cried Gale, starting up in the bed.

"Nay, nay, you need not be alarmed; you may dismiss your apprehensions," said the cousin, smiling; "I have discovered the secret of your attachment, which is all that I intended to do, but that is the last quarter in which I should dream of becoming your rival."

"I have no attachment of which I am aware, and if I had, there would be no reason for my keeping it a secret."

"I am glad, very glad to hear it, for in that case you cannot be offended at my expressing my real opinion of Miss Norberry, and counselling you most earnestly against being inveigled by her arts."

"Inveigled! arts! Of whom are you speaking? What do you mean?"

"Of your being fascinated by her personal charms I have no fear, for she has none whatever to recommend her."

"I differ from you *toto caelo*. Miss Norberry may not boast the merely physical beauty which can be imparted to a picture or a statue, but her animated, intelligent, and ever-gracious countenance possesses, in an eminent degree, that moral loveliness which an artist cannot express, and which time will not alter or diminish, since it is the divine halo which, emanating from her mind, will continue to the last to shed its embellishing light around her features. This is worth a thousand evanescent charms of form and colour—this is the grace, the fairness, the symmetry, of the soul ! and this it is that distinguishes the beauty of an angel from that of a flower."

"I thought you were not attached to her, and yet you are comparing a girl, with an indifferent complexion, and without a single good feature, to an angel!"

"A man may render tribute to truth and justice without being in love."

which you see an imaginary reflection
countenance? Far be it from me to impute
any grave improprieties; I do not impugn
her honour; but she certainly entertains
singular notions upon many points,
professes opinions and pursues a line of conduct
widely different from those of other
ladies."

"So much the worse for other you may say;
I never heard her utter a sentiment which
knew her perform an action, that was in any way
creditable to her head and heart!"

"And yet you are not attached to her?"
Now I must freely confess that I do not
either what I have heard or seen of Mrs. M.
berry, and I am very confident that
she and all your friends would be glad to have
you for a daughter."

"I did but jest, and have already told you my reason."

"Caleb, I do not quite understand you : this is no subject for trifling ; still less for prevarication or evasion. I demand of you an explicit declaration, upon your honour, that you have no attachment, no intentions of marriage, towards Miss Norberry."

I give it you with the utmost readiness, and disclaim any such intentions in the most solemn manner, though I can scarcely help laughing at your jealous suspicions. There are three insuperable objections to my ever thinking of matrimony with the lady in question ; in the first place she has no money, which I consider an indispensable requisite in a wife ; secondly, her husband will in all probability be saddled with her testy waspish father, and her weak-witted aunt ; and thirdly and lastly, I do not like her person, while I positively dislike her character. As you say you have no particular regard for her, you will of course pardon my frankness."

"Willingly : pray go on enumerating her

faults ; I had much rather hear you abuse than praise her. You see how mistaken you were ; I am quite indifferent."

The cousin's reply was prevented by the entrance of Cecilia, who came to congratulate her brother on his good night's rest and amended health, as well as to offer to read the paper to him, which however he declined, saying he had much rather chat with her. She accordingly gave the journal to Caleb, who hurried with it to the window, and instantly became deeply absorbed in its contents, murmuring

notice either of Gale or Cecilia, who were, however, too much occupied to observe the deviation from the usual deference and even servility of his demeanour.

Shortly afterwards Sir Matthew entered the chamber, bursting into an obstreperous exultation as he noticed his son's amended looks, and learned that he had passed a much better night than could have been expected. His present interview was but of short duration, for the physician, who now made his appearance, declared that his patient had already been talking too much, and ought to be left alone for the remainder of the morning.

Sir Dennis Lifford, once more marvellously punctual, presented himself in Portland Place at the appointed hour, and was presently closetted with Sir Matthew, to whom he communicated without the least reserve the state of his affairs, before he solicited his consent to the marriage. From his deportment in this interview, it was evident that much of his habitual foppishness and coxcombry were assumed, for he discarded his airs and affectations, dis-

cussed the business upon which they met with quickness and intelligence, and answered all the interrogatories put to him by the blunt and straightforward Sir Matthew with great apparent frankness. The first question advanced by the latter referred to the intended place of residence, for he required as a *sine quâ non* that his daughter should not be altogether taken from him, a point upon which the suitor satisfied him at once by declaring that he would reside three months in Ireland, and the rest of the year in London. It had been one of the objects of his visit to the Metropolis to consult the highest legal opinions as to the possibility of cutting off the entail

the well when the pump handle's chained. What 'ee want it for? make ducks and drakes of, hey—hick? Don't wish an acre cut off—little ship sink a great leak. Why can't 'ee live upon income—very handsome. You Irish fellows so fond of extravagance—heymwhat!"

"Indeed then, my dear Sir Matthew, you quite misunderstand the thing altogether. Is it upon our income that we won't live? Never fear, and have money to spare too; only you see by the provisions of this cursed entail I'll not be able to make any settlement upon Miss Middleton, except her own money, which of course will be secured to her own self, every penny of it. Shall I put all the documents and papers into the hands of Mr. Burroughs, and he'll tell you exactly how I am circumstanced, for deuce a bit do I understand of the law, and never will, please God."

It was agreed that this should be done; Sir Matthew mentioned the sum that he meant to give his daughter upon her marriage, securing it in the manner proposed; and Sir Dennis, after

having warmly thanked him for yielding his consent, and acting in so handsome a manner, stated the reasons that made him anxious to have the ceremony performed with as little delay as possible. It appeared that his relation, the Earl of Ballycoreen, had invited him to Paris, where he was then residing, and had named the day by which he wished him to arrive. He was described to be a rich and eccentric old man, to whose fortune as well as title Sir Dennis was not unlikely to succeed, if he conformed to his wishes, and humoured

sleeping poultry catch no fox. Tell 'ee some day how I stuck to old Jemmy Gale, the soap-boiler—meant to get Brookshaw for myself though—left it to his godson—choused there—hey!—hick!"

Sir Dennis took his leave with fresh thanks, promising to put the title-deeds of his estate in the hands of Mr. Burroughs; and Sir Matthew, who was infinitely better pleased with him at this interview than he had ever been before, exclaimed, as he left the room, "That Irish chap not such an ass as I took him for—mind the main chance—up to snuff—many ruined by hunting foxes—never heard of a legacy-hunter coming to the Gazette. Pity he dresses like such a jackadandy, but can't put old shoulders upon young heads. Dare say the fellow will be Earl of Bally—what 'ee call it? What, my Ciss a Countess!—hick—hick—hick!"

All parties were anxious for the recovery of Gale, in proportion as their hopes and prospects were implicated in that event. Sir Matthew's feelings were the most single and unalloyed,

for, as he cared not about expediting his daughter's marriage further than as her arrival at Paris with her husband might give the latter a better chance of succeeding to the Earl's fortune, he watched over his son's convalescence with the eagerness of a hasty temperament and the affection of a fond father. Cold, selfish, and cherishing but little regard for her stepson, Lady Middleton was merely solicitous for the quick re-establishment of his health, in order that there might be no delay or interruption in the two great objects upon which her heart was now set,—the marriage with Sir Dennis, and the grand party that was to be patronised by the Duchess. Sir Dennis, although he knew little or nothing of Gale, had more motives than any other for wishing him to be pronounced out of danger, since his marriage and his journey to Paris would both be indefinitely protracted should his illness assume any serious or lingering character. Cecilia, who was sincerely attached to her brother, would have ardently desired his recovery even for his own sake, though it cannot be denied

that her wishes became more anxious and intense when she reflected that her nuptials depended on the state of his health, and when she recalled the sinister adage, more applicable, perhaps, to matrimonial engagements than to any other, that delays are dangerous. Even Caleb Ball, who had no participation in these various hopes and fears, absenting himself, for the first time in his life, from Lloyd's Coffee House and the Royal Exchange, passed several afternoons in the sick-chamber, ministering to the invalid, while his mornings were devoted to the Bow Street officers, whom he accompanied in their exploratory visits to such haunts of the thieves and resurrection-men as were likely to furnish information upon the late mysterious affair. After several conferences with Sir Matthew, at which he stated Gale's insuperable objection to offering any very large reward for the discovery and apprehension of the malefactors, Caleb was empowered to get handbills printed, and to insert advertisements in the papers, promising such a moderate sum as might induce one of the criminals to turn

king's evidence, while it was not likely to lead to the accusal of an innocent man. These announcements were profusely inserted in the journals; Caleb himself superintended the bill-stickers, who covered the walls of the metropolis with similar notices: but neither the universal publicity thus given to the occurrence, nor the reward offered, nor the unremitting exertions of the officers employed, succeeded in gathering any clue to the offenders, or in throwing the smallest light upon an affair which seemed destined to remain involved in impene-

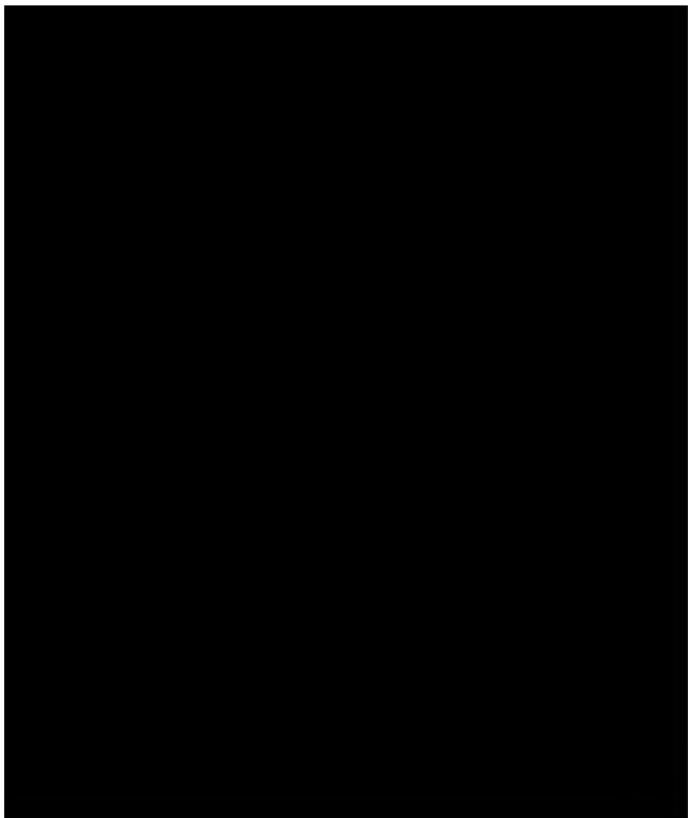
was this intelligence, which seemed, indeed, only to throw an additional darkness on that which was already sufficiently obscure, it was all that could be obtained, after many days' active research on the part of magistrates, policemen, Burroughs, Caleb Ball, and a whole troop of satellites who were employed to assist them.

Youth and an excellent constitution, aided by the best medical advice of London, enabled Gale Middleton to recover from his injuries much more rapidly than had been anticipated. At the end of a few days he was pronounced well enough to be removed into the country, a notification which he received with too much delight not to avail himself of it as speedily as possible, only delaying his departure from London until he had caused a liberal recompence to be bestowed upon Mrs. Tapps and such of her neighbours as had been in any way instrumental in extricating him from his perilous situation. Even the young chimney-sweepers, a class with whose sufferings he had always deeply sympathised, and whose fate he

than in lending any assistance
covery of the villains who
attempted to assassinate him.
Matthew urged that his
sably required in town, that
this object by such information
himself could supply, or if
should any of them be apprehended,
gency of which the indignation
not, even for a moment, restrain him.
Equally fruitless were the suggestions
Middleton that he would do
honours of her approaching marriage
of Cecilia, that he would come
order to be present at her wedding,
could be extorted from General
again become silent.

celebrations. Sir Matthew, seeing that his son was determined on going, took care to have him attended by careful servants and provided with every requisite, when, with tears in his eyes, he gave him his blessing, promised to run down to Brookshaw Lodge as soon as he could, and stood at the door waving his hand until the carriage in which Gale took his departure turned out of Portland Place into the New Road.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



GALE MIDDLETON.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

GALE MIDDLETON.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"BRAMBLETYE HOUSE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1833



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GALE MIDDLETON.

CHAPTER I.

“ This, this is holy ; while I hear
These vespers of another year,
This hymn of thanks and praise,
My spirit seems to mount above
The anxieties of human love,
And earth’s precarious days.”

— “ A piteous lot it were,
To flee from man and not rejoice in nature.”

WORDSWORTH.

So affectionate was the nature of our traveller, that, although he disliked London, and had ever been warmly attached to the country, more especially to his own sequestered retreat of Brookshaw Lodge, he could not quit the paternal roof without a deep dejection of spirits. There were few more fond or indulgent fathers than Sir Matthew, who, in the recent illness of his son, had evinced a deep and constant

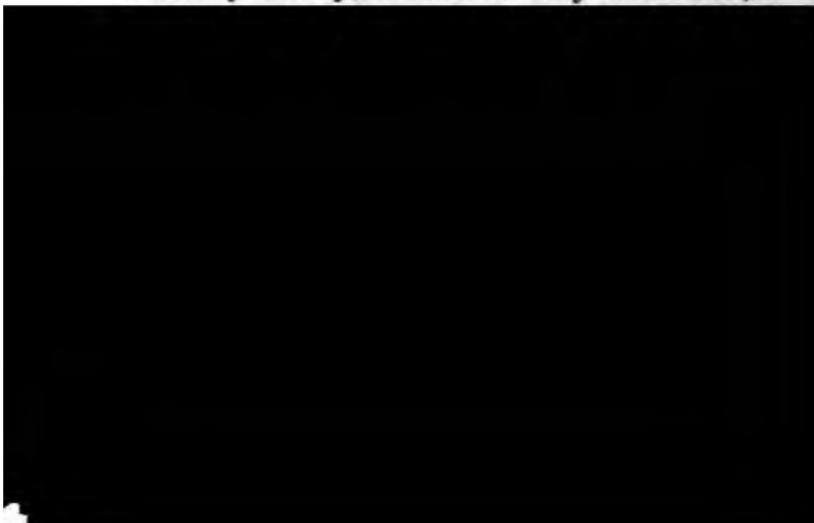
tenderness, coupled with such an ungovernable rage against his assailants, that Gale's heart yearned towards him with a sense of gratitude which increased the pangs of separation. Cecilia, too, had tended him with an assiduous earnestness, the more winning because he had never before seen her exhibit so much warmth of feeling; his bosom thankfully acknowledged her good offices, and his depression was deepened when he reflected that her approaching nuptials would dissolve that family tie by which they had been attached to one another from the time of their birth. Caleb Ball, too, on the late occasion, had exhibited so much more feeling than he had ever imagined him to possess, that Gale could not leave him behind without a sensation of grateful sadness, and even ordered the postchaise to drive into the city, that he might call at the counting-house to renew the expression of his thanks, and to wish him good b'ye.

Never had he been able to pass through the crowded streets of this busy quarter, and to mark the sodden complexions, anxious care-

worn countenances, and eager hurrying of its countless throngs in the pursuit of the most grovelling objects, without giving way to those gloomy disparaging views of human nature and of the destiny of man, which occasionally darkened his mind, and imparted a morbid bitterness to his spirit. At the present moment his feelings of melancholy, assisted perhaps by the weak and exhausted state of his body, rendered him so peculiarly susceptible to these impressions, that, as he revolved in thought his own fate, and the probable doom of the crowds whom he was passing and meeting, he broke into one of those passionate soliloquies in which his desponding reveries would often find a vent.

This diatribe was interrupted by his arrival at the counting-house, whence his cousin was summoned to the door of the postchaise, to receive his thanks and his adieus. With his pen behind his ear, and a file of bills of lading in his hand, he came to the side of the carriage, his clay-coloured complexion, and the heavy immobility of his features, giving him the appearance of a leaden statue rather than of a

human being. The excitement by which he had been aroused had passed away, and he had relapsed into his usual frigidity and inanimation. Taking a pinch of snuff, as if to convince himself that he was alive, he coldly expressed his satisfaction that Gale had adopted his advice by going to Brookshaw Lodge, and counselled him to remain there permanently, adding, that he would immediately write should any clue be found to the thieves, of which, however, his hopes were much less sanguine than they had been. Pleading an engagement with an indigo-broker, he then extended towards his cousin a hand that was as cold and motionless as that of a corpse, and formally wishing him good morning, returned to the counting-house, taking another pinch of snuff, the only luxury, if such it may be termed, in



heart. When Caleb was in Portland Place the kindly impulses of our common nature, which were dormant, not extinct, started into momentary life. In Lawrence-Pountney Lane the benumbing touch of trade has frozen them into their pristine torpor. Surely there must be merchants of a nobler and more enlarged spirit, men who, in the consciousness that "true self-love and social are the same," endeavour to promote the interests of the community while they are seeking to advance their own, even as the industrious rower, by constantly pulling towards himself, helps forward all those who are in the same boat with him."

The crowds of people and of vehicles in the Borough, the noisome atmosphere, together with the incessant rumbling, clamour, and hurly-burly, almost bewildering the senses of our traveller, whose head was not yet able to endure such stunning uproar, plunged him again into a dark and desponding vein of thought. Over the sunless picture that his imagination shadowed forth his distorted religious views threw an additional gloom, pre-

senting the great mass of the beings who were passing him as not only doomed to toil and misery in this world but to inevitable and eternal anguish in the next—a species of nightmare, which always started up before him like a hideous apparition, when he was in this morbid mood, and which now oppressed his feelings with such a withering effect, that he could not shake the ghastly phantom from his mind. By keeping his eyes closed, his mental vision remained riveted to the spectre that it had conjured up; and he sate absorbed in this painful contemplation, as if the glare of the fabled basilisk, or the spell of some malignant genius, were upon his spirit, until his reverie was dissipated by the stopping of the carriage in order to change horses.

Little conscious of what he was about, he alighted and followed the waiter into the hall, or rather passage of the inn; but, instead of turning into the room intended for his reception, he proceeded into the garden at the back of the house, passed along a gravel-walk, and, opening the gate at its extremity, advanced

into a quiet meadow, belted with ash-trees and sapling oaks, whose foliage harmonized, even in its contrast, with the richer and brighter hues of the grass and the bright blue sky. To our bewildered traveller the transition seemed scarcely less sudden and marvellous than if he had been conveyed by some good angel from a dungeon to a paradise; for he had neither marked the lapse of time nor the gradual local change by which this seeming miracle had been accomplished. He had seen no object since he left the Borough; his last-remembered sensations were those of a noxious atmosphere, of smoke and dust, of stunning din, of narrow, dirty streets, crowded with wretches whose wan countenances wore the impress of sickness, misery, and turmoil. Well might the far different scene with which he was now surrounded assume the appearance of enchantment. All was softness, beauty, and tranquillity! From the unclouded sky the morning sun shed a mild radiance, that seemed to steal into the very heart of nature, like a smile from heaven! Wherever he planted his foot the flowery turf,

refreshed and brightened by an early shower, sent up a fragrant odour, that mingled with the balm of the breeze in which the vernal leaves fluttered their young wings, as if impatient to escape into the air and join the butterflies; tufts of primroses and other wild flowers, clustered beneath the shelter of the trees, and on the sunny banks, welcomed the spring with their laughing many-coloured eyes; a hidden rill that skirted the meadow, betrayed itself by its cheerful tinkling; the birds warbled and twittered in chorus, while, from his unseen organ-loft in the sky, the lark, intoxicate with sunbeams, poured down lighted lyrics that made the very air thrill, and could scarcely be heard without awakening the ecstasy they breathed! Upon no unsympathising ear did their melody now fall. In conjunction, with the heart-healing smiles that lighted up the face of nature, they diffused a benign serenity over the spirit of Middleton, soothing its disquietude as oil allays the troubled waters, and gradually raising him from the blackest despondency to an intense but quiet rap-

ture, only to be expressed by the tear that glistened in his eye, and the religious gratitude that swelled his yearning heart! Naturally sanguine and cheerful, though warped by a succession of untoward circumstances from its proper bias, his mind, whenever it could throw off the incubus that oppressed it, resumed its original tendencies with a delight that seemed to seek compensation for all its sufferings by snatching for a brief space a condensed and exquisite enjoyment! The present was one of these beatific moments.

For some time he stood still, abandoning himself to the delicious sensations that thrilled through his frame, and listening in a mute rapture to the continued carols of the winged chorister and poet of the sky. Elated as he was, his feelings shortly received an additional excitement and exaltation by his catching, from afar, the two fluty notes of that rarely seen and self-echoing wanderer, the cuckoo. Even in later life, when the imagination is less susceptible, that magic sound, opening the long closed storehouse of memory, and drawing up

the curtain of the past, will often reveal to us a fleeting apocalypse of our youth, with all its lost impressions and half-forgotten pleasures. Upon the responsive heart of its present auditor it fell with an almost electrical effect. In well constituted minds, a sense of extraordinary happiness is generally accompanied by a fervent feeling of religious gratitude. Had this been one of Gale Middleton's ordinary fits of enthusiasm, it would have found its customary vent in some passionate apostrophe; but his impressions were too deep, too solemn, too ineffable, in their delight, to be thus expressed. He drew forth a miniature from his bosom, gazed intently upon it, pressed it with an air of profound adoration to his bosom, and then, with beaming eyes uplifted to the sky, tendered to heaven that mute homage which is, perhaps, more acceptable than all the eloquence that ever was uttered by the tongue. Yes—reception and favour shall assuredly be extended to those pure offerings which we lay upon the altar of the heart, when grateful and happy feelings are the ministers of the bosom's

temple, and the soul, yearning towards its Creator, and unable in its speechless ecstasy to breathe a prayer, calls upon expressive silence to "muse his praise."

In this holy and beatific entrancement Gale Middleton remained wrapt; until his servant unwelcomely dispelled it by coming to announce that the carriage had been for some time waiting, when he slowly dragged himself from the heart-soothing meadow, casting many a lingering look behind, and without uttering a word stepped into the vehicle, which presently whirled him along the road at a rapid pace. Although his rapturous feelings gradually subsided, he continued during the remainder of the journey in a gracious and complacent mood, which was exalted into new delight, when he at length caught sight of the humble spire of Brookshaw church, and, presently afterwards, through the intervening trees, obtained occasional glimpses of the scalloped gables that surmounted his own residence. In the seclusion of this rural abode, in his chemical pursuits, his long rides and pedestrian

wanderings, and in ministering charitable offices to the poor, he had passed the least infelicitous days of his life, for he had few absolutely happy ones; and he returned to it with a keener relish, from a recollection of the manifold annoyances he had experienced in London.

In its principal features, the hamlet of Brookshaw was described by its name, for it presented a streamlet winding between two shelving slopes, which had been originally covered with a shaw or thicket. On one side, none but the older and larger trees had been

and rapid, diffused to some distance a gushing sound which was by no means unpleasant, especially in the summer, when it carried with it an idea of coolness.

On the other side of the stream stood the parish church, and Brookshaw Lodge, the smooth shaven grass and the well-trimmed edges of its grounds contrasting with the ragged and rushy banks opposite to them. The house, which was by no means large, and only derived its air of importance from the humility of all the adjacent buildings, was constructed in the old-fashioned conventional style, with projecting casemented windows, scalloped gables, terminated by a cross, massive chimneys of spiral brickwork, and an advancing porch with seats on either side. In front, a moderately-sized garden was squared into parallelograms by formal beds and walks, the central point of intersection being occupied by a sundial. But the pride and the ornament of the place, according to the opinion of Robin the gardener, and of the villagers in general, were two yew-trees clipped into the shape of enor-

mous peacocks, that flourished on either side of the great iron gate with which the surrounding wall was pierced, and which were probably coeval with the building, since a peacock formed the crest of the stone-wrought arms inserted over the porch. Though tradition had not rescued from oblivion the family to which this escutcheon belonged, it had preserved the names of these two evergreen peacocks, who had been known from time immemorial as Cæsar and Mark Antony. To Gale's predecessor they had been the principal inducement for purchasing the property; and the present owner, always consulting the feelings of others rather than his own, suffered them to remain in all their grotesque glory, as soon as he saw the value attached to them by the villagers, and more especially by Robin, who would probably have rather cut his own throat than have cut down either of these ancient friends and favourites.

The front portal in the garden-wall led to a rustic bridge of one arch, which formed the communication with the village; and there was

a side gate parallel with the porch, that opened into the church-yard. To the proprietor of a mansion thus circumstanced, there must be something affecting in this identification of himself and of his family with the adjoining church and burial-ground; in reflecting that his coffin and his corpse will be borne along that gravel-walk, and through that doorway, which he traverses upon every sabbath; and that the majority of the villagers with whom he is assembled in prayer will probably be one day collected to gaze upon his funeral. Any saddening feelings that such considerations may awake must be more than counterbalanced by the wholesome and monitory thoughts that accompany them.

Covering a gentle ascent behind the house, the ancient shaw, enlarged by the plantations of former proprietors, was pierced by shady walks and green alleys, which, from their diverging courses, seemed to describe a much larger space than they really occupied, for the pleasure-ground comprised only a few acres.

Gale's recent misadventure had for some time past formed the prevalent subject of conversation among the good folks at Brookshaw, which sequestered village, being out of the high road, and not often visited by travellers, supplied few topics of indigenous gossiping. Although the young squire, as he was generally called, sometimes received in their more confidential colloquies the title of the queer gentleman, or the college nickname of "Crazy Middleton," which had somehow transpired, as every thing does that is disparaging to its object, he was universally reverenced as a philosopher, whose chemical apparatus and experiments imparted to him something of a mysterious and wizard character, while his affability and benevolence had procured him the love of all his tenants and neighbours. The day of his expected arrival being known, the whole rural population had been on the tiptoe of expectation for some hours previous to his appearance; and no sooner was his carriage descried coming down the little descent that led to the village, than the wheel-

wright cast away his hatchet, the blacksmith threw down his hammer, widow Stubbs ran out of the chandler's shop, the fat and ruddy Master Penfold, the butcher, hurried to his door, which he completely filled up, and others of the villagers, with their children and barking dogs, hastening down the various footpaths that led from the slope to the water, stationed themselves by the roadside, bowing, curtseying, and bobbing, as the carriage passed, and welcoming the young squire back to Brookshaw with cordial greetings and blessings, mingled with commiserating remarks on the paleness of his looks, and execrations of the villains who had assaulted and wounded him. The black bandage across his temples excited a peculiar sympathy in the younger female villagers, who seemed to think that there was something more than usually atrocious in disfiguring such a nice-looking young gentleman, and compelling him thus to hide his beautiful head of hair.

Much gratified by the manifest cordiality of his reception, the traveller sate up, ex-

hausted as he was, lowered the window, spoke to several of the villagers by name, and in answer to their respectful inquiries, expressed his conviction that he should soon get well, now that he found himself once more among his good friends at Brookshaw.

So little personal attendance was required by Gale Middleton, whose habits were perfectly simple, and who liked, as far as possible, to wait upon himself, that an ancient couple, assisted by a damsels from the village, formed the whole of his domestic establishment. The former, both of whom had been servants to his godfather, had resided for many years in the lodge, the wife officiating as cook and housekeeper, and the husband, whose name was Robin, discharging the functions of gardener, footman, and factotum. Horticulture, however, which had been his original profession, was ever paramount in his mind, all sublunary things being considered vain and unimportant when compared with the kitchen and flower garden; but the great object of his existence seemed to be the punctual clip-

ping and snipping of Cæsar and Mark Antony, the huge vegetable peacocks of which we have made honourable mention, and which he watched and trimmed with as much tenderness as if they had been his own children. Robin was still hale and vigorous enough, in spite of his years, for the efficient discharge of all his various duties, though he would have been less tiresome if the notion that he was a little bit of an orator had not occasionally betrayed him into nonsense and garrulity. In figure he was tall and spare, but muscular; on either cheek-bone there was a patch of red that looked like the sunny side of a winter apple; his blue eye, though somewhat sunken, retained its gleaming light; while his grey eyebrows, and the few locks of silvery hue and silken texture that skirted his bald head, conferred upon him an air of respectability superior to his station.

Both Robin and his wife, who were sincerely attached to their master, felt hurt that he should have brought other servants with him, as they thought themselves competent

to the performance of all the services that his state might require, an opinion to which, even in the midst of their cordial welcomings, they could not refrain from giving utterance. Rather pleased than offended by a jealousy springing from affection, Gale took an opportunity of assuring them that he had brought down the strangers in compliance with Sir Matthew's wishes, not his own, and that he should seize an early opportunity of sending them back to London. Delighted by this intelligence, old Madge curtseyed and simpered, and bustled out of the room to prepare tea; while Robin, standing by the easy chair into which his wearied master had thrown himself, and peering affectionately in his face, exclaimed—"Dear heart! dear heart! you look terrible sickly and blighted like, and yet every thing hereabout do thrive so well, and look so healthy, and make such uncommon good shoots! Capital news, master! capital! the country will do now, and we shall get over all our troubles famously, that is to say if the final ends be adequate to the first results."

"What, Robin ; from the effects of the Reform Bill, do you mean ?"

"No, master, no ; from the effects of these dry winds and cold nights what have radiated the slugs, and grubs, and snails, and such like vermin. I ha' emigrated the thistles, and rushes, and nettles, and such like, that had almost choked up the water-course, down by the old willow ; and I ha' brandished away the brambles and underwood that were smothering the young saplings in the dairy copse."

"You could not have been more appropriately occupied, honest Robin. And what other news have you to tell me ?"

"Oh, master ! something that it will make your heart glad to hear. Cæsar has got as good a leg as ever, for the leaves have come on again where they were blighted last year ; and Mark Antony's beak is three inches longer than it was, and the tuft atop of his head is now as round as a cannon ball, so that the whole figure's feasible and incongruous. Ah ! if you feel rested enough, I 'm sure it would be a consolidation to your very soul just to

a step."

"Not now, good R
say they will not fly a
and to-morrow mornin
better."

"Dear master! it w
minutes, and you'll be g
that you lost no time.
tures, and Cæsar no lon
where that blundering b
cut his throat with the she

"I'm glad he has rec
not, I cannot go and co
present, I desire to see noth

"Which on 'em, maste
the anemones? Both is
quite a vision, and the ye
soon be comino' into us."

the radishes, and the cucumbers; why, it's worth walking ten mile to see them."

"My good Robin, pray leave me till to-morrow; I am fit for nothing now but to go to bed, that I may sleep off the fatigues of my journey."

"Oh! I ax pardon; that's what you mean, master, be it? Well, to be sure! only to think that you should be able to close your eyes for the night without ever having seen Cæsar and Mark Antony. Dear heart! dear heart! you can't have a single atom of disregard for the beauties of nature."

The well-meaning, but garrulous and wearisome old man withdrew, and his master retired at an early hour to rest, fatigued in body, but in a complacent frame of mind, that contrasted signally with his deep dejection upon leaving London in the morning. Grateful for the serenity he enjoyed, although past experience would not allow him to calculate on its continuance, he offered up his thanks for the present tranquillity of his mind, as well as for his safe arrival at Brookshaw, and quickly sunk into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER II.

Heaven's favours here are trials, not rewards,
A call to duty, not discharge from care,
And should alarm us full as much as woes,
Lest while we clasp, we kill them ; nay, invert
To worse than simple misery their charms.

YOUNG.

flowery meadows, and the cheering delights of groves and gardens ; when those delicious winds were blowing—

"That dance upon the leaves, and make them sing
Gentle love-lays to the spring—"

the Duchess was just commencing her fashionable season and that succession of parties which, compelling her to sleep through the greater part of the glorious, balmy, and sunny day, would condemn her, night after night, to the glare of offensive lamps, the suffocating atmosphere of crowded rooms, and the melancholy gaiety of balls, concerts, and routs, where all, equally tired of each other, and of the monotonous routine that brought them together, only increased the general ennui which all had met to dissipate. After art has reached its acmé of perfection, the insatiable demand for novelty can be gratified only by a gradual relapse into comparative barbarism ; a secret that explains why the declension of taste has generally been rapid in proportion to its previous elevation and fastidious refinement. Satiated with all the combinations of beauty

and symmetry, it was her Grace's fancy to doat upon frights, to find pleasure in the unpleasant, elegance in the inelegant, and to surround herself with the representation of objects from which, had they been real, she would have turned away with terror and disgust. Her necklace was formed of scarabæi, or Egyptian beetles; at her breast she wore a crocodile-brooch; in her hair a gorgon; her bracelets were of twisted serpents; and other articles of jewellery were fashioned into the likeness of the most revolting reptiles. In the ornamental

human beings, the subjects chosen were always mean and ignoble, and sometimes disgusting, so that they were offensive, even in that which constituted their sole merit—their fidelity.

Art had equally triumphed over, or rather distorted, nature, in the flowers dispersed about the boudoir in vases supported upon brackets. All were rare exotics, and most of them, by grafting and other processes, had been made to assume uncongenial colours, or new combinations of form, that destroyed the consistency of their appearance; while their unhealthy aspect, combined with their faint and sickly odours, rather saddened than cheered the bower wherein they were imprisoned. This melancholy impression was increased by the plaintive note of a Java bird, which, instead of being exhilarated by the sight of one of its native flowers, beside which it was incarcerated in a little gilt cage, only seemed to bemoan its fate with a more doleful cooing.

On the zebra-wood table, amid a profusion of jewels, baubles, and trinkets, of all sorts, were lying various books, scattered about with

a careful negligence, and all betraying that second childhood of literature, where they are valued rather for their rich bindings and exquisite engravings than for the letter-press. They consisted chiefly of Annuals, a class more looked over for its plates, and more overlooked for its literary matter, than any that ever professed to address itself to the understanding as well as to the eye. Among them were two or three of the pseudo-fashionable novels, whose authors, substituting personality and scandal for plot, character, and incident, sought a transient popularity, which, even when it was obtained, was equally discreditable to its bestowers and its receivers.

At the foot of the table panted a corpulent pet pug, pronounced by many an enraptured peeress to be a perfect love of a fright, and abundantly justifying, by his ugliness, the latter appellation. Pampered into ill health and ill humour, the wretched little creature expressed, by constant wheezing, snapping, and snarling, a sense of the cruel kindness that had fondled it into its present unnatural state. It was by

no means out of keeping with its mistress, upon whom indolence, luxury, and inoccupation had produced nearly similar effects. From their being so rarely called into use, her bodily and mental faculties, as we have already intimated, had become sluggish and obtuse; indulgence of all sorts increased the evil, and sickness supervened, bringing its invariable concomitants, peevishness and ennui. As she reclined in an easy chair, receiving into her listless ear the liquid, fairy-like tinklings of a musical snuffbox, with which she occasionally sought to beguile the tedium of existence, surrounded with everything that could steep the senses in voluptuousness, dressed with an ornate splendour that scorned considerations of expense, the hues of her amber drapery softened by the mild light that blushed through the sweeping folds of the rose-coloured curtains, the air faint with the odour of tuberoses and other exotics, and her eye resting with a languid indifference upon jewels and rarities, for which all the elements and every quarter of the earth had been ransacked, the Duchess, toge-

ther with the accompaniments of her boudoir, presented a specimen of refinement and luxury, pushed to an excess that completely defeats its own object, and converts the enjoyment which it seeks to condense and sublimate into satiety, sickness, and dejection.

This most envied of the enviable, but in reality the most to be pitied of the pitiable, happened, at the moment of which we are writing, to be labouring under an attack of the vapours, which she was endeavouring to dissipate by turning over the pages of a new novel, the only books into which she ever looked; and even these were generally read to her by Miss Borradaile, till they answered their object by lulling her to sleep. Half dosing and half thinking of the engagements for the night, as she dawdled over the leaves, the Duchess yawned, and asked in a drawling voice, — “ Pray, Miss Borradaile, what day is it ? ”

“ Wednesday, madam,” replied her companion, who sate in the adjoining drawing-room, with a profound metaphysical work in her

hand, ready to be produced, if any visitant should chance to enquire the subject of her studies.

"But you never told me the day of the month."

"I thought I had already mentioned to your Grace that it was the tenth."

"Very likely; but you know how I forget things. I'm sure you never informed me what month it was."

"Because I did not imagine your Grace could have been unaware that it is the merry month of May, as our poets call it, while Milton exclaims—

'Hail! bounteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth and youth——'"

"Nay, pray give us no more—I detest Milton; the Duke tells me he was a radical. What does the man mean by its inspiring mirth? I have seen nothing of the mirth of May but the bedizened chimney-sweepers, who announced its arrival, and I'm sure they were melancholy objects enough. The tenth of May, is it? Heigho! I wish the London

season were well over; it is dreadful work, and yet any thing is better than the country, and that odious Burwell Park, which I hate worse than any place in existence, always excepting our Warwickshire prison of Pillerton Hall. Do me the favour to look at my engagement book, and tell me what martyrdom I am to endure to-night."

"There is Lady Selina Silverthorpe's party; a ball at Lady Gauntley's; and the music at Lady Middleton's, which your Grace has undertaken to patronise."

all his attainments. It really qualifies him to become a hero of romance, which is a much better thing than a philosopher."

From this conversation it will be seen that her Grace had not been apprised of Gale Middleton's departure from London, a fact which had been purposely suppressed by Lady Barbara Rusport, lest it should defeat the arrangements made with Lady Middleton, and invalidate their mutual contract.

" Talking of romances," resumed the Duchess, "this satirical novel has made me smile in spite of my blue devils and my headache, for some of my most intimate friends are inimitably shown up—unmercifully ridiculed; and yet in common candour I feel bound to confess that their characters are not overdrawn—not in the least. Indeed, if they were, one would not recognise them so immediately. Whoever he may be, the author is certainly uncommonly clever; too much so in some respects, for he presumes his readers to be equally learned, and I found myself at fault upon several occasions. Pray, Miss

Borradaile, what is the exact meaning of 'the lower empire ?' and what is a catachresis ? and when was the edict of Nantz revoked ? and who was Leo the Tenth ?"

Too much accustomed to such abrupt interrogatories to be in the least disconcerted, Miss Borradaile adjusted her spectacles, and in a pompous oracular voice began to reply to them, veiling her ignorance as usual, whenever she was doubtful of her ground, by an additional confidence of tone and circumstantiality of detail. In the midst of a most elabo-

respecting some of my friends, which would have rendered his ridicule infinitely more caustic and piquant. After all, however, these publications are very mischievous and indefensible, and ought not to be encouraged. If there are any others lately published, mind that I have them. You may read on from page 218, *sotto voce*, if you please. It is all very well to have a masculine understanding, but a voice to match is too much for my poor head."

These last words were spoken in a whisper.

Having fixed her spectacles in their proper position, and cleared her throat by a loud preparatory hem, Miss Borradaile read two or three pages, which possessed no particular interest, until she came to the following passage:—

"But the Juno of the fashionable Deities who had thus usurped the Olympus of the exclusive world, was the Duchess of Megrim, whose total want of attraction, either personal or mental, combined with her great wealth, had secured to her such an unblemished reputation, that it was equally impossible to deny

the purity of her conduct, or the grossness of her corpulent form ; the fulness of her purse, or the emptiness of her head ; the strength of her thick legs, or the weakness of her mind ; the goodness of her conjugal character, or the total want of character in her flat unmeaning face. As the castle may well stand that has never been besieged, so the Duchess had never run away from the Duke, (although the whole world of his acquaintance seized every opportunity of setting her the example,) for want of a scapegrace to accompany her Grace in her escape. This was sufficient to constitute her a second Arria or Portia ; and yet she had few domestic virtues except the virtues of her domestics, in the choice of whom she was laudably fastidious, taking none that were not good-looking, and six feet high. Prodigal of money where it could save her from the least trouble or annoyance,—with little disposition to discover real objects of charity, and no firmness to resist the importunity of impostors —she distributed her unavailing bounties rather to relieve her own feelings than those of others,

and was thus most selfish when she seemed to be most philanthropic.

"She loved her husband as he deserved—that is to say, not at all—and her friends as they expected, treating them with the politest courtesy before their faces, but amply indemnifying herself behind their backs. In fact, there was but one person in the world to whom she was sincerely attached, and that one was, perhaps, the least deserving of her preference, for it was herself. The attachment was attended with one advantage—she could never fear a rival. Unattractive as the painted Dutch frows hung up in her boudoir, and not less peevish and plethoric than the waddling pug that ——"

Here the reader, who had been for some time reddening, boggling, and hesitating, came to a full stop, uttered a huge hem! and exclaimed—"This seems very scurrilous, stupid, and unintelligible. Had I not better pass on to something else?"

"By no means," said her auditress, who entertained not the most distant suspicion that

the caricature was meant for a likeness of herself. "I cannot imagine who is intended by this character, but the author paints with such perfect fidelity to nature, that we shall be sure to discover. So pray go on."

Miss Borradaile, somewhat released of her embarrassment by the inapprehensiveness of her companion, thus proceeded:—"Not less peevish and plethoric than the waddling pug that wheezed at her feet, her ungraceful and ungracious Grace, whose want of ladylike qualifications would have excluded her, had she

friends were candid enough to admit, that, if she had not been worth money, she would have been worth nothing. Not the less implicitly was she reverenced as the goddess of the exclusives, the superlatives, the inaccessibles, the high and mighty fashionables: and we scarcely know upon which of the two parties we are passing the severest censure, when we declare that the idol and the worshippers were every way worthy of each other."

" Oh ! the satirical creature !" cried the Duchess of Harrowgate, " whom can he possibly mean ? Very extraordinary ! I recognised all his other portraits at once : indeed, there was no mistaking them. Let me see—it cannot be the Duchess of Swansea, for *her* reputation is anything but unblemished ; nor her Grace of Roscommon, for she, though ugly enough for the picture in every respect, is as poor as a rat ; nor the Duchess of Maynooth, for though her thick legs, flat unmeaning face, and insipid character, answer the description well enough, she has no high descent to boast of, her grandfather having been a

thriving shopkeeper in the city. I could mention half a dozen to whom all the disparaging touches would be applicable enough, but I know not a single one who can claim unblemished reputation, illustrious descent, and great opulence. I suspect that our satirist can flatter when it suits him. Read on, however, read on, and I doubt not, that we shall presently solve the enigma, and find out whom he means."

Encouraged by this singular blindness on the part of her patroness, Miss Borradaile re-

enacting the Minerva she had no other qualification than that she resembled the owl of that goddess, not only in her screeching voice, and solemn air, but even in her countenance, especially when her round purblind eyes were cased in spectacles."—Here the reader again stopped in considerable embarrassment, for she began to recognise her own likeness, but, feeling that it would be better for both parties to dissemble her discovery, she read on with a nervous eagerness and increasing agitation, that hardly allowed her to complete the following extract. — "This petticoat quack afforded a notable instance of what may be accomplished by skilful humbug and confident pretension, in bamboozling weak-witted peeresses and hoodwinking such lords of the creation as are entitled to carry coronets upon, and nothing within, their heads. When we say that our smatterer was in reality as shallow as she imagined herself to be profound, we shall not have placed in too conspicuous a light her ignorance and her conceit. Unlike the ancient oracles, which generally gave ob-

scure and enigmatical answers when they felt themselves utterly unable to resolve questions propounded, our modern Pythoness was generally explicit and circumstantial in proportion to her want of knowledge—a species of intrepid assertion, which we could illustrate by innumerable specimens. Let the following suffice:—‘What is the Pragmatic Sanction?’ asked the Duchess, who had met with the phrase in a newspaper. ‘It is the sanction,’ replied Miss Blinkinsop, ‘given by the Council of Prague in 1529 to the expulsion of the Jews as recommended by Pope Boniface the Second. The word was originally spelt Praguematic, but has become corrupted, like many other things, by the course of time.’—‘Pray,’ Miss Blinkinsop, inquired her Grace, ‘what does this author mean by saying, that the bodies of the ancients were usually destroyed by cremation?’—‘He means, madam, that they were reduced to an unctuous matter resembling cream, or rather to a species of tallowy substance which the French physiologists have denominated *adipocire*. A great quantity was

discovered in the cemetery of the Innocents at Paris, in the autumn of 1744.'"

Notwithstanding her inordinate self-conceit, Miss Borradaile recognised a sufficient degree of likeness in this caricature to be completely overcome by it, and there was therefore some truth in the averment of her indisposition, although she attributed it to a fictitious cause, when she exclaimed,—“ I feel such a sickly faintness from the odour of those tuberoses, that I must beg permission to retire. Any other time, if your Grace wishes it, I can continue the reading of this book, though it really seems to me, a most scandalous, scurrilous, stupid, false, contemptible, spiteful—” As the indignant wrath of the speaker kept rising with every fresh epithet, she would probably have burst into tears had she ventured another, but she covered her retreat and her agitation by a seasonable “ hem !” and hurried from the boudoir, carrying with her the obnoxious novel, lest her patroness should feel disposed to finish its perusal.

Though the torpid Duchess was always

craving for excitement, that which she now experienced was by no means of an agreeable nature. Not that she was displeased at the castigation bestowed upon Miss Borradaile, for she did not like her, and always bore the misfortunes of others with great philosophy ; but in recognising her companion's portrait, which she did immediately, she had unfortunately discovered that the *pendant* was meant for herself, and thus was she doubly mortified, not only in her own person, but in being represented as the dupe of a shallow and illiterate pretender.

as to refute itself. Nor has poor Miss Borradaile any of the gross ignorance imputed to her by this clumsy slanderer; if she had, I must have discovered it long ago. However, the very suspicion is an additional motive for getting rid of her, and I must quickly give her a *congé*, either by marriage, or by pensioning her off." This soliloquy was interrupted by the announcement of Lady Barbara Rusport, to whom the Duchess, making not the least allusion to the satirical novel, communicated her increased anxiety to dispose satisfactorily of "the amiable and talented Miss Borradaile." Her Ladyship, aware that the husband whom they had selected for her had withdrawn from the scene of action, strenuously recommended a small pension as a sovereign remedy, and undertook to negotiate the matter between the kind-hearted Duke, and the object of his intended bounty. "*Bien entendu,*" said the Duchess, "that we cannot secure the young citizen as a husband, an arrangement which, in spite of all her protestations about independence, and freedom, and single blessedness,

I have no doubt poor Miss Borradaile would prefer ; while I know it would be more acceptable to the Duke, who is absurdly fastidious in such matters."

Great had been the anxiety and incessant the occupations of Lady Middleton, since the Duchess of Harrowgate condescended to fix the night when she was to honour her with her presence in Portland Place. Paragraphs announcing this important event had duly gone the round of the fashionable journals, and the gossips and scandalmongers had been busily occupied in assigning uncharitable motives to both parties for forming such an unprecedented and incongruous alliance. Some insinuated that her Grace, who had seen all the other sights, shows, and monsters, in London, betook herself to Portland Place for the sake of inspecting a real live citizen and citizeness in their own house, just as travellers are induced by curiosity to visit a kraal of Hottentots, or a horde of New Zealanders. Others suggested that she had been attracted to the *terra incognita* in question solely by a desire to behold

the young gentleman who had been so mysteriously buried alive, and for whom, as it was currently reported, a round sum had been offered by a travelling showman, if he would consent to be exhibited at Bartholomew Fair. Most of these paragraphs, which were bandied about with a malicious industry, contained some sneering allusion to the civic origin of Lady Middleton, and to her folly and presumption in thus thrusting herself into a fashionable coterie, whose only object in receiving her was the same that formerly admitted the low-born fool at court,—to make her the butt of their ridicule and contempt. Caustic and stinging as they sometimes were, Lady Middleton's predominant feeling, in the perusal of these attacks, was always of a pleasing nature, for they made no humiliating averment that she did not feel to be abundantly counterbalanced by the wide-spread announcement of the visit she was about to receive from the dictatress of the exclusives. There were others with much higher claims to the distinction than Lady Middleton, who would

gladly have borne the brunt of ten times as much sneering ridicule, could it have ensured them an admission into the Duchess of Harrowgate's circle; so cringing, so base, so degrading is the morbid mania for enrolment among the fashionable *élite*, on the part of many English females, who, in every other respect understand the dignity that is due to their sex and to themselves.

When this long-projected party was first announced to Sir Matthew, it encountered his decided opposition; for, as he cared not a doit for the whole peerage, and had a thorough contempt for people of fashion, whom he designated as a set of painted butterflies, or idle drones that brought no honey to the national hive, he had always ridiculed his wife's fan-



tesses, with as many feathers in their head as would rig out a funeral! Fine feathers don't always make fine birds, though, hey, hick! Find 'em in fiddle-scrappers and squalling Signoras, give 'em French kickshaws for supper, with as much Roman punch and Champagne as they can pour down their long throats, and all this for a set of high-bred cattle, that I never saw afore, and never want to see again, and none of whom will pay a farthing for making an inn of my house! Won't swear cause 'ee be always telling me to be genteel, but if I do, my name's not Matt. Middleton."

"But, my dear," coaxed the wife in her softest purring voice, and with her blandest smile, "consider the great, the enviable, honour of our receiving the Duchess of Harrowgate in Portland Place. Her Grace——"

"Is a platter-faced squaw," interposed the husband. "Don't want any grace in my house, except before dinner and after, and that's the only grace you don't seem to care about—had 'ee there! Lord love 'ee, Meg, do strike a light and look for your wits; what's come to

'ee? Won't have more mice in my house than I'll catch cats. Tell 'ee what. If your lords and ladies want to fill their craws, and hear catgut-scraping in Portland Place, let 'em pay piper—let 'em cash up a guinea a head. Know better than that—more than their head's worth: had 'em there! Hey, hick, ha, ha, ha!"

Lady Middleton had too much of the conventional politeness instilled by what is termed a genteel education ever to wrangle or to lose her temper; while her natural good sense, con-

dripping that wears a stone, at last grinds down the most obdurate opposition. By an exercise of domestic tact and good management, her ladyship contrived to secure by way of compromise every object at which she had been aiming, even to the exclusion of her husband, the baronet giving his consent to the party, provided he was not expected to be present.

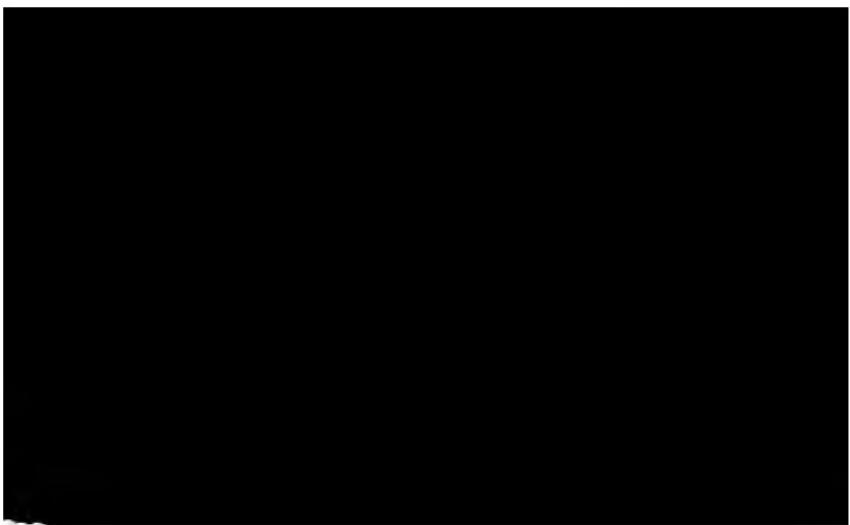
"Won't play the waiter when I'm the landlord," he exclaimed; "laugh at me if they like, behind my back, but not to my face: if they want a cat's-paw, let 'em take yours.—Well, well, every man's a fool now and then: women always—ha, ha! had 'ee there, plump! Never mind, Meg: life's too short for quarrelling: here to-morrow, gone to-day: all vanity and vexation; I got the vexation, you got the vanity: had 'ee there again, hey?—hick, ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Sir Matthew!" cried Lady Middleton, who, whenever by finesse and management she had carried her point, endeavoured to persuade her husband that she had yielded

to his superior authority, " My dear Sir Matthew, you are so inflexible when once you have formed a resolution that I have nothing to do but to submit. Be it therefore as you wish, though I am really vexed that I cannot induce you to do the honours of our party, as I fear it may seem disrespectful to the Duchess."

" Disrespectful to a fiddle-stick ! What respect did she ever show me ? Never saw her full-moon fishy-looking face but once : thought she was a great halibut : had her there, hey ?—hick, what ?—"

Lady Middleton dropped the conversation, and hurried out of the room, declaring that she heard the knock of Sir Dennis Lifford, who had promised to accompany herself and Cecilia on a shopping expedition to Regent Street.



conversing with Cecilia. Having completed his toilet, he moved deliberately round, raised his glass to his eye, and measuring Lady Middleton from head to foot, drawled out,—“ Why, then, ‘pon my honour it’s mighty ilegant ye’re dressed to-day, Lady Middleton, and the braids look nater than the *créped* curls all to nothing, only they’re a trifle thicker on one side than the other. Ah, then, I’m sorry to hear this morning from Mr. Burroughs that, in spite of the big reward, and the hue and cry that’s been raised, ye haven’t discovered any of the fellows that played such havoc with your son. Och, the villains ! It’s uncommonly ex-tr’or’nary they can’t get hold of them.”

“ We still hope to do so,” said Cecilia. “ Though we may not succeed in the first instance, Providence will never suffer such a crime to go long undetected and unpunished. We fully calculate on some of the party turning king’s evidence.”

“ And so they will, never doubt it. I bet a hundred to eighty that the matter’s all cleared up in three months, and some of the rogues

crossing the water to Botany Bay. Talking of crossing the water, I must really once more intrate of ye, ladies, that ye 'll fix an early day for making me a happy fellow. Mr. Burroughs will have all the papers and the marriage articles ready by Tuesday next, and I do hope the ceremony may take place on Wednesday. I have many reasons for wishing it. Is it Wednesday I said? Sure that's the day I talked of going to Greenwich with Sir Terence Flanagan to eat white bait; and I betted him fifty I 'd row all the way back

Matthew to give his consent. Oblige me in this, and ye'll be conferring a mighty favour upon me."

" You are very importunate, Sir Dennis, but I really cannot see the necessity for such extreme haste. Cecilia, I dare say, will not change her mind."

" That may be uncommonly true, Lady Middleton," said the Baronet, passing his fingers slowly through his hair; " but then you know, *I* may."

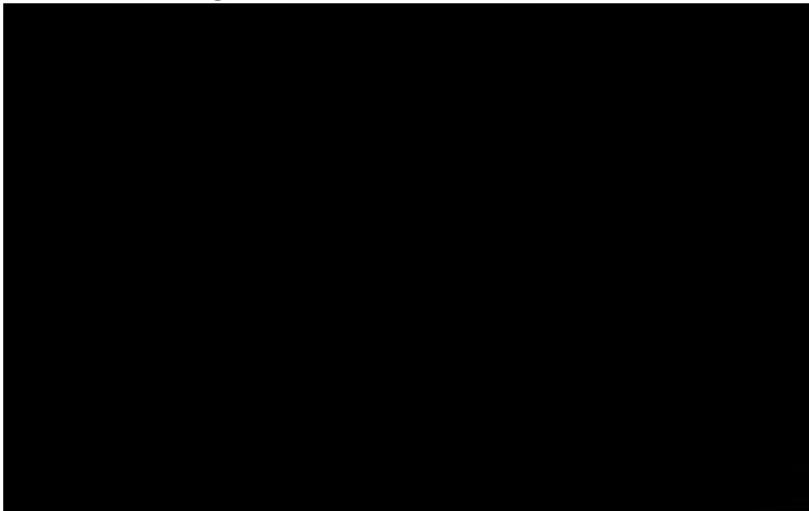
" If there is any chance of that," said Cecilia, reddening with anger at such an impudent speech, " you had better not commit yourself by an irrevocable vow. I should be sorry to interfere with your party to Greenwich, and I beg therefore that you will hold yourself at perfect liberty to——"

" Nay, nay," cried Lady Middleton, equally alarmed at the lover's indifference and at her daughter's petulant reply, " you must not take Sir Dennis *au pied de la lettre*; this affected nonchalance is, after all, only a *façon de parler*,

adopted in compliance with the fashion. As a man of honour, he would never think of withdrawing from so solemn an engagement."

"Ah now, Lady Middleton, indeed and that's mighty kind of you; and sure its every bit true. Is it I that would be for putting off the marriage, when all I want is to have it brought on as soon as possible, for reasons concerning Lord Ballycoreen at Paris, in which we are all equally interested, as I have already explained both to your Ladyship and Sir Matthew. Och then, Cecilia! don't look so hard-hearted and cross, but say you forgive me. Sure, when it's such a mons'ous bore to remember things, a man may sometimes forget himself."

Cecilia, who had been completely piqued out of her usual placidity, made no reply, but stood pouting and twiddling a card-case round



"O what a deal of scorn looks beautiful
In the contempt and anger of that lip!
Cecilia, by the roses of the Spring,
By manhood, honour, truth, and every thing,
I love thee so, that, maugre all my pride,
Nor wit, nor reason can my passion hide."

"There!" exclaimed Lady Middleton, "I am sure you cannot remain inexorable after such a declaration as this. I never saw Sir Dennis half so animated; but, when people are really in love, they are easily excited into these rapturous effusions. He reminds me of Gale, only that I never saw your poor brother half so well dressed."

Cecilia, who had not forgotten the similar scene at the Colosseum, and who thought it impossible that a man should spout poetry to her upon his knee unless he was furiously enamoured, was easily won, not only to pronounce his forgiveness, but to promise that she would assist her mother in endeavouring to persuade Sir Matthew to consent that the marriage should be solemnised in the following week.

CHAPTER III.

Where now, ye lying vanities of life,
Ye ever-tempting, ever cheating train !
Where are you now ? and what is your amount ?
Vexation, disappointment, and remorse.

THOMSON.

IT happened that, on the day fixed by the

and tormented herself in all the preliminary arrangements ; how keenly she had calculated the mode in which the greatest display could be reconciled with the smallest expense, so as to combine magnificence with meanness ; how she had racked her imagination and exhausted her taste in arranging the decorations for the rooms, and the ornaments for the supper table ; how long and deeply she had meditated upon the new dresses to be worn by herself and her daughter—these and a thousand other hows, whys, and wherefores, “ the willing Muse shall tell.” Suffice it to state, that all was at length completed to her entire satisfaction ; the great, the important, the long expected, night had arrived ; the drawing-rooms, hung with rich draperies, and brilliantly illuminated with wreath-entwined lamps, lustres, and candelabra, seemed to anticipate, by their joyous aspect, the gay and glittering pageant of which they were shortly to be the scene ; every thing in short was ready, and every thing wore a look of cheerful expectation, unless we may except the bass-viols, violoncellos, and other musical instru-

ments deposited in a little orchestra, fitted up at the extremity of the suite. These vehicles of harmonious sound, which had so often enraptured a polite audience, and were about to do so again, appeared, by their grave aspect, to be wrapped up in the dignity of their own silence, and to be either feeding upon the recollection of their past exploits, or to be seriously perpending what they should next achieve. The leader's violin, supported by a music-book, was evidently consulting the bow twisted beneath its bridge; the subordinate instruments were not less obviously listening to the conference; and as to a portly bass reclining against the wall in a brown study, you might have sworn that he was weighing the respective merits of Rossini and Mozart. Perhaps we may have erred in thus interpreting the meditations of these inanimate occupants of the orchestra; but as to the significant and serious air of self-importance which they severally assumed, we speak without the smallest fear of contradiction.

Lady Middleton's good taste, of which we have already made honourable mention, shone

conspicuous in the embellishments of the apartments, which were at once chaste and rich ; sufficiently resplendent to stimulate and delight, but not so gorgeous as to dazzle and satiate the spectator, or to offend him by an air of ostentation. In her personal appearance the same nice tact was perceptible. Other wives, circumstanced like herself, might have thought themselves justified, considering the great reputed wealth of Sir Matthew, in bedizening themselves with diamonds, and challenging the admiration which the high and low vulgar willingly concede to such evidences of opulence. Aware of her origin, though she did as much as possible to forget it, and determined not to afford a plea for any sneering imputations upon civic finery, Lady Middleton left her jewels in their box, and, avoiding all attempts at magnificence, only sought to render her attire as elegant and as becoming as possible.

As a special favour, she had procured from Lady Barbara Rusport a list of the company to be invited, with an intimation, however,

that some addition might be subsequently made to the number. Over this catalogue, many names of which appertained to members of the high and mighty exclusives, superlatives, and inaccessibles, had she brooded with the exultation of a little mind, which feels that it is about to triumph over and to mortify all its competitors. Of these names she had extracted the most fashionably conspicuous to weave into a variety of newspaper paragraphs, writing them with her own hand, and seldom concluding her employment without ejaculating in a

will be no small uproar," she continued, "among my old acquaintance, when they find that not one of them is invited to my party; but as I shall be under the necessity of cutting them when I have the *entrée* among the exclusives, it may be as well to bring our separation to immediate issue, and give them their dismissal at once. It is only to be never at home to them when I am in the house, and never to see them when I am abroad, and the whole affair will be settled in three months."

This soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of Cecilia, who, under her mother's directions, was attired with an elegant simplicity, though the effect of her well-turned and well-dressed figure was neutralised by her inexpressive features and general air of insipidity. "I am sorry that we are not to have Sir Dennis to night;" said the mother, "he assures me that he could easily have accomplished it, through some of his noble friends who are acquainted with the Duchess; but as he abhors a crowd, has no particular *penchant* for music, and abominates trouble of all sorts,

he declared that he would not be at the of applying for a ticket."

To this observation the daughter made an unimportant reply, and, as they walked down the room, both endeavouring to assume an air of self-possession, which was foreign to their hearts, they fell into conversation on the approaching entertainment, each fearing that the Duchess and Lady Barbara would not come early, as there would otherwise be much awkwardness in their being totally unacquainted with their guests. It was now out a sudden start of the body, and a little trepidation of spirit, that they heard a first thundering knock, which seemed sufficiently consequential to announce the considered patroness of the entertainment. To their great disappointment, it proved to be a party of titled strangers, whose names could not be caught, so miserably were they derided by Dupin, who gallicized one what he heard, and perverted the other into gibberish. Carriages now rolled in intermitted succession into Portland

loud and incessant became the appeals to the knocker ; Dupin announced a whole Babel of unintelligible appellations ; peers, peeresses, and commoners, poured through the open door ; the drawing-rooms began to fill with turbaned chaperons, rouged staring dowagers, tittering young ladies in tulle dresses and wreaths, *roué*-looking elderly gentleman with bald heads and spindle shanks, and here and there a solitary juvenile beau. Tongues chattered in every variety of intonation, from the loud confidence of the oracular and infallible peeress, to the lisp of the simpering *debutante* ; plumes waved, diamonds glittered, and silks rustled ; but still the Duchess and Lady Barbara did not make their appearance, and the embarrassment of Lady Middleton and her daughter, who, amidst all this interchange of recognitions and tittle-tattle, were no more noticed in their own house than if they had been statues, increased with every passing minute. Evident as was the awkwardness of their situation, it excited not in their distinguished visitants the smallest attempt to remove it ; they conducted

themselves exactly as if they were in a theatre, or other public place, into which they had paid for admission. Upon these occasions there is a negative rudeness which none but the polite world can assume, and which is almost as offensive as a positive incivility. They who had first arrived, and who could not therefore fail to recognise the mistress of the mansion and her daughter, measured them superciliously through their glasses, and passed on with a cold stately indifference to criticise the rooms. There were but two unnoticed outcasts, and their

derstand that Sir Matthew—really I quite forget the gentleman's name—is a citizen and alderman. How very odd!—exceedingly singular!—remarkable! People may well talk of the march of intellect!"

Pride, it is said, feels no pain; but even Lady Middleton, with all her pitiful ambition and grovelling aspirations, felt humiliated at being exposed to so much impertinence in her own house. Cecilia, abashed at the bold and almost contemptuous stare with which she was regarded, whenever she ventured to lift up her eyes, could have cried outright; and both the mother and daughter listened with increasing impatience for the announcement of the noble patroness, who was to introduce them to their visitants, and enable them to be at home in their own house.

At length they caught the welcome names of the Duchess of Harrowgate and Lady Barbara Rusport, when they were presented in form, first to her Grace, and subsequently to several of her friends, most of whom comported themselves with an air of stiff, cold, haughty

condescension, little better, even in its assumed courtesy, than a direct insult. At this juncture a name was announced which would have induced Lady Middleton to distrust the evidence of her ears, but that the individual to whom it appertained was presently ushered into the drawing-room. It was no other than Mrs. Howard Maltby, who, having by some inexplicable means procured an introduction to the Duchess, had contrived to get invited to the party. Magnificently dressed, and looking provokingly well, she tripped up to the Duchess, made her a profound obeisance, smiled graciously upon the mistress of the mansion, and then ran up to every individual with whom she was acquainted, in order to state that she came as the friend of the Duchess, not in virtue of her relationship to the lady of the house. Poor Lady Middleton was ready to sink into the earth with vexation. To mortify Mrs. Howard Maltby had been the main object of the party which she had collected together with so much management; and now to find that her sister

had anticipated her in making the acquaintance of the Duchess, and outsparkled her in her own house, was beyond all human endurance. The victim, thus justly punished by the disappointment of her machinations and the recoil of her own angry feelings, writhed under the infliction ; but good-breeding and conventional politeness enabled her to conceal her emotions beneath a smile more than usually bland and complacent. After the Duchess had gone through the form of presentation, leaning all the while on the arm of Miss Borradaile, she enquired for Gale Middleton, and on learning that he had been compelled, on account of his health to visit the country, she expressed her disappointment in terms that showed her to be out of humour, while her *protégée* brought her spectacles nearer to her eyes, and uttered a doleful and dissonant hem ! From this moment her Grace, evidently piqued, introduced no more of her friends, but sunk into an easy chair, gazing at the assemblage with a vacant unconcern, and venting her spleen upon her

Lady Middleton, already
concerted, saw that somethin
illustrious patroness, thoug
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object of attention, wished
music, as the performers
mostly taken their positions
but even this she hardly knew
without contravening the in
received from Lady Barba
vulgar, which it was her spe
“*Laissez faire*,” was to be
absolute *nonchalance* was
meanour. Far from caring
was not even to wear the s
for herself, so that she wand
up and down her rooms, w
aching heart but smiling a

celerating it, lest she should exhibit an unfashionable *empressemement*. For want of proper arrangements beforehand a tedious delay ensued, but the leader at length gave his preparatory flourish, the company took their seats, the place of honour being appropriated to the Duchess, and the concert at length began.

It exhibited the usual features presented by such entertainments among a people who pay more and care less for music than any other upon the face of the earth. The timid young ladies, who had been afraid lest their voices should be overheard, now ventured to flirt and chatter, like parrots, under cover of some of the finest pieces of Beethoven and Rossini; while the dowagers and old women gossips of either sex seemed determined that their tongues should keep tune with the fiddlesticks, getting into a louder key with every *crescendo* movement, as if resolved to "ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm." Had Orpheus himself played to such a herd of human animals, he would have set nothing dancing but their tongues. Even the vocal performers failed to

command more than an occasional attention, most of the company being evidently of opinion that no voice was so sweet as their own; while all offered a most audible and irrefragable proof, that even the taciturn English may be stimulated into loquacity by really good music. Upon this occasion, however, the spectators, we cannot call them auditors, were not less enthusiastic than discriminating in their applause, invariably lavishing the most ecstatic “bravos!” upon those songs or pieces to which they had paid the least attention. To be sure, they reserved these marks of favour for the

the charms of music. When a private concert is to be followed by a supper, the last two or three pieces are sure to collect a numerous and eager audience, a fact that was illustrated at Lady Middleton's, where a knot of officers, a bevy of beaux, and two or three *vieux garçons*, all of whom, if they had no stomach for music, had at least an excellent ear for champagne and Roman punch, simultaneously made their appearance full three minutes before the commencement of the finale.

The performers, doubtless very much flattered by the vehement applauses they had received for not being heard, now took their departure, and the company began to perambulate the rooms, waiting for the announcement of supper, when a disturbance sounded up the stairs from the hall, of which we must give a passing explanation. Foiled in all her attempts to procure a ticket for the party, and yet determined to make a bold push for admission, Mrs. Burroughs had arranged with her friend Dupin, whose service she procured by a bribe, that she should be smuggled into the

drawing-room during the *mélée* that usually precedes the going to supper. For the music she cared not, but she coveted the *éclat* of being present; and she only desired to be in time for the supper, because her dear little darlings were so fond of *bonbons*. Attired accordingly in her new figured silk dress, and bedizened with all her jewels, baubles, and gold chains, she presented herself in Portland Place; but, unfortunately for the success of her scheme, the Duchess had ordered that none should be admitted who did not bring their

taken to his heels and sought sanctuary in the drawing-room.

Here the company were still lounging about in different groups, beguiling the time with such elevated and edifying conversation as is usually heard in similar assemblages. After complimenting one another upon their mutual good looks, their divine *toques*, delicious turbans, and exquisite tiaras, the elderly ladies parted from their dear friends with a most affectionate smile, and then whispered to their companions,—“Never saw her look so ill in my life,—a frightful head-dress, but, poor thing ! she never had an atom of taste.” The young ladies flirted, and simpered, and talked nonsense almost as glibly as the dandy danglers by their side ; while the elderly gentlemen, gathered together in solemn conclave, discoursed with a becoming gravity of the winners and losers at the Newmarket meeting, of the new female opera-dancer, and of a recently discovered intrigue in fashionable life, upon the subject of which they evinced a proper

sense of morality, unanimously condemning the parties for the irremissible crime of—suffering themselves to be found out.

Tom Rashleigh, for thus familiarly was he always termed, who affected, upon every occasion, to be the very latest of the late, and who had rather hear the liquid music of outpoured champagne than the finest strains of Paganini, now made his way into the drawing-room, where his progress was presently arrested by the Duchess of Harrowgate, to whose arm-chair he was summoned. Her Grace's motives for wishing to conciliate the man she most disliked, we have already stated ; but though she feared him, she found a certain pleasure in his society, for he sometimes said droll things, sometimes abused her best friends, and in either case administered a momentary excitement to her stagnant faculties. “ Dear Mr. Rashleigh !” she exclaimed, “ I am glad you are come, but how shockingly late you are ! This affair is awfully dull ; I have not found the least pleasure in it hitherto, and now I have lost Miss Borradaile.”

"Surely *that* must be a pleasure. I congratulate your Grace on the loss, and recommend you to offer a handsome reward to any one who shall find, and *not* bring her back."

"Nonsense! do tell me whether you have passed her in the *mélée*."

"Oh, yes! I saw her just now—*quite plain*."

"I understand the meaning of your emphasis, but I will have no reflections on poor Miss Borradaile, who does not make any pretensions to beauty."

"I don't know why she should not, since she lays claim to talents."

"Why should you always be so censorious, Mr. Rashleigh?"

"Why should others wish to monopolise all the scandal to themselves?"

"You do not glance at me, I hope. No injurious rumours can be laid at my door: I am merely an echo."

"Echo never begins a story, and in babbling about what she has heard from others, makes it less at every repetition. Far be it

from me to doubt that your Grace acts up to this character."

" Nay, *our* dull jibes may be excused ; they fall to the ground by their own weight."

" But mine, your Grace would infer, being pointed with wit, and sometimes barbed with epigrammatic verse, fly like an arrow, and seldom suffer their object to escape without a wound. Ay, there 's the rub. Doubtless you think, as others have done, that I deserve to smart for my smartness. I might be as malignant as others, if I would only be as stupid.

bited the man who performs upon his chin, and the child who plays the Battle of Prague upon a penny trumpet, and the Swiss milk-maid who yells the Ranz des Vaches ; and for my coming *soirée*, I had made sure of securing the son of our civic host, about whose strange adventure in the church-yard all the world have been lately talking ; but he has taken himself off into Sussex—was ever any thing so provoking ! One cannot easily get another man who has been buried alive."

" Not in London, Duchess ! in the country they are common enough."

" They say that the poor young man's intellects, not of the strongest order before, will never recover from the fright."

" Talking of frights, yonder is Miss Borradale, walking arm in arm with old Lady Totteridge, who pretends to have a nervous affection in the head—the only thing she has in it, by the by—in order that she may display her diamond tiara to more glittering advantage. I wonder that your *protégée* should select for her companion a deaf, dull, peevish crone, who,

were it not for the Thames Tunnel, would be the greatest bore in existence."

"It must be confessed that Miss Borradale is somewhat singular in her tastes: she always attaches herself to what everybody else dislikes."

"I never understood until now the secret of her inordinate self-love."

"You are prejudiced against her; in solid attainments, I can assure you that there are very few of either sex who come near her."

"They are quite right; *I* wouldn't, for one. Ah! I do her an injustice; I see she can ad-

all occasions so confidently sneered at upstarts and fellows of low birth that he had actually extorted credit for being a person of good family. "Pray, Duchess," he continued, "did you notice that beautiful cast of Minerva in the hall?"

"No!"

"Then I will speak about it to Lady Bridget O'Leary; she, you know, must have seen it, for she has always a cast in her eye."

"How can you be so illiberal? hers is by no means a squint, but an agreeable obliquity of vision. Her admirer, Jack Rutland, thinks it a beauty."

"Ay, her eye is like a bowl; its bias takes it out of the straight line, only that it may more certainly hit the Jack. *Apropos* of little deviations from the straight line, where is your friend, Lady Barbara Rusport?"

"Just now she was sitting at the window of the boudoir, gazing at the moon, of which she has always been fond."

"That I can understand, for there is a man in it."

"I cannot listen to such innuendoes. Would you insinuate that Lady Barbara — ?"

"I only say that she is a philanthropist. A person so charitable as your Grace will hardly hold this to be a disparagement."

"Really, Mr. Rashleigh, I do not exactly comprehend you."

"Truly, Duchess, I can very easily believe it; but hark! there is the supper bell, which few will deny to be the best and pleasantest music they have heard to-night. Shall I have the honour of escorting your Grace down

variety of handsome ornaments, having been hired for the decoration of the tables, they presented a very brilliant appearance; the banquet was elegant without any gewgaw tawdriness, and sufficient without superabundance; yet the comfort of the whole entertainment was spoiled by some of those paltry economies from which Lady Middleton could not refrain, even in the midst of a profuse expenditure. Rather than pay the full price to men accustomed to wait at table, she had engaged a cheaper and less expert set of assistants, who, not knowing where to find any thing that was wanted, and unable to comprehend the broken English of the sputtering Dupin, ran over each other, spilled the liquids and the viands upon the guests, and filled the whole apartment with most admired disorder. The champagne, being from Sir Matthew's cellars, was of excellent quality, but as her Ladyship would not incur the expense of ice, which she declared to be unnecessary, and had moreover ordered the wine to be deposited upon the tables beforehand lest it should be purloined by the ser-

vants, it had become so warm as to be scarcely drinkable. Nor had she been more fortunate in the Roman punch, which, having been furnished by an inferior confectioner, who supplied it at a lower price, was little better than a libel upon the exquisite and unrivalled beverage of which it bore the name.

As some of the young sprigs of fashion conducted themselves very much as if they had been at a tavern, their dissatisfaction at these epicurean delinquencies came to the cognisance of Lady Middleton, not only by their distaste-

patiently at her watch, as if anxious for the hour at which she had ordered her carriage.

In spite of these partial failures, the banquet seemed to be passing off with a tolerable cheerfulness, so far as might be judged by the commingled clatter of tongues, glasses, and plates. A supper-party is almost always pleasant and sociable, and the present offered no exception to the festive and hilarious character of such entertainments, so far as the guests were concerned; though the mistress of the mansion and her daughter were not participants in the general gaiety. With a serene and complacent smile mantling over her features, the former sate upon thorns; while Cecilia, abashed and unnoticed, and feeling herself completely out of her element, sighed more earnestly for the conclusion of the entertainment than she had ever desired its arrival. The general exhilaration, however, continued to increase; the madeira and frontiniac, which were pronounced admirable, and were willingly substituted for the delinquent champagne, seemed gradually to thaw the torpor of even the most

frozen fashionable;—the *bonbon* crackers exploded with a sharp report that justified an affected exclamation of alarm from some and a derisive snicker from others; the significant mottoes elicited pleasant titterings; smiling countenances, white teeth, and sparkling eyes were to be seen in every direction; the solemn fopery of *Aunt ton* had been so far forgotten, that an unequivocal, we had almost said a hearty, laugh had more than once been heard; in short, the whole party was at its very acmé of enjoyment, when a sudden and obstreporous

when, upon a proposal being made that some devilled turkey should be ordered for supper, Sir Matthew ejaculated—“ Hey, what ?—do you want some—hick !—supper I mean. Lots to be had at my house. Meg has got the platter-faced duchess, and a set of scarecrow countesses to listen to—hick !—tweedle dum twee, and squally-wally. More fool she :—never mind : can’t make a silken sow of a purse’s ear. Tell ‘ee what, lads. ’Spose we tumble in upon ‘em and help ‘em to—hick ! finish the—hick !—capital fun ! frighten platter-face and the scrags of mutton out of their wits. Hick, hick, hick ! Ha, ha, ha !”

For an enterprise that was to begin with a wild frolic and end with a supper and champagne his auditors, who were still more intoxicated than himself, were exactly in cue, and they accordingly received it with a shout of assent. Sir Matthew, scarcely able to stand, less, however, from ebriety than from his chuckling laughter, as he thought of the astonishment which his unexpected appearance would excite, invested himself in his alderman’s gown ;

his companions put on their robes; and the whole party reeled into a hackney-coach, shrieking a verse of one of their standard bacchanalian songs—

What's life but a frolic, a song, and a laugh,
My toast shall be this, while I've liquor to quaff,
May mirth and good fellowship always abound,
Boys, fill up a bumper, and let it go round.

On descending from their vehicle in Portland Place, they found lying on the hall table some of the instruments belonging to the performers, when each, "for madness ruled the hour,"

species of masque, the first cries and faint screams of the females were rather indicative of surprise than dismay; while the rest preserved silence, in order to gather, if possible, the meaning of the scene. Meanwhile Sir Matthew, still plying his screeching fiddle and hiccoughing his bacchanalian chorus, advanced to the head of the table, and, fixing his fuddled grapy eye upon her Grace of Harrowgate, stammered out—"What, hey, are you the moon-faced Duchess?—hick! very glad to see —no—ar'n't glad at all—not my doing—all Meg's—hick! But now you're come I'll give 'ee a buss, not—notwith—notwithstand—hick!"

The first person that seemed to comprehend Sir Matthew's real plight, was the Honourable Augustus Fortescue Sidney Clavering, a sprig of nobility and a cornet of dragoons, who, after peering at him through a jewelled eyeglass, ejaculated with a distasteful look, and in an effeminate lisping voice—"Ath I hope to be thaved! the nathy fellow 'th beathly drunk!" This had already been discovered to be the

case with the Baronet's companions, who, in the fond, maudlin blindness of intoxication, had offered to salute some of the mummy-like dowagers, and rouged scraggy countesses, occasioning a shrieking, dismay, and confusion, which it would be difficult to describe. In the midst of this hubbub the reeling Alderman put his audacious arm round the fat throat of the Duchess, and attempted to salute her cheek, when her Grace, struggling to avoid the indignity, escaped from the embrace, leaving in his arm not only her *toque* and its splendid ornaments, but the entire wig that concealed the ravages of time upon her head.

Heavens and earth ! was ever such a profanation known ? The dictatress of the *haut ton*; the queen of fashion, the autocratrix of the exclusives and the inaccessibles, to be thus exhibited to the *élite* of her subjects, sitting upon her throne with a bald pate !! Even the inebriated Sir Matthew seemed by his stolid and bewildered stare to be struck aghast at this unexpected apparition of a bare scalp; but, as he discovered the cause of the pheno-

menon, he exclaimed — “ Hey, what ? little scull, big body—like a turnip on a sack of—Hick, hick, hick ! Ha, ha, ha !”

The age of chivalry hath not altogether passed away. An indignant cry of—“ Knock him down !” burst from the knights and cavaliers who had witnessed this inexplicable outrage, and several of those who surrounded the offender prepared to obey the summons ; but the object of their wrath, always as bold in spirit as he was powerful in body, and now inflamed by the vinous valour that delights in a scuffle, no sooner perceived their intention, than he brandished his violin as a weapon of defence, and whirled it round him with a sudden and vehement swing which brought its extremity in collision with the scull of the Honourable Augustus Fortescue Sidney Clavering. The hollow sound that ensued, might have proceeded either from the instrument, or from the cranium upon which it impinged ; but the effects upon the respective vacua were very different. With a lugubrious groan, the smashed violin breathed its last upon the spot,

while the unwounded cornet merely measured his length upon the floor, beholding an incalculable number of additional lights, and ejaculating “ Oh the thocking, thanguinary thavage ! Thave me ! thave me ! I am quite thure he hath thplit my thcull !” He had nothing further, however, to apprehend from his assailant, for Sir Matthew having overreached himself in the blow, tumbled beside his prostrate victim, and was utterly unable to rise again from the floor.

In other quarters of the room two or three of

respectable and well regulated purlieus of Portland Place. Either on foot or in carriages, for the withdrawing of the visitants rather resembled a disorderly flight than an ordinary dispersion, the whole of the fashionables had presently betaken themselves to more appropriate haunts, leaving the scene of recent uproar to a melancholy tranquillity. Although the Duchess, by the assistance of some of her friends, had almost instantly re-established herself in her *toque* and peruke, she was too much mortified by the exposure she had suffered, and her apprehension of the ridicule which would be entailed upon her by Tom Rashleigh's satirical muse, to proceed to any other party ; and she accordingly returned home in a most splenetic mood, vexed beyond all measure that she should have subjected herself to so much humiliation and annoyance, and yet not have succeeded in procuring the desiderated husband for Miss Borradaile.

Sir Matthew, the unconscious Marplot of all his lady's schemes and devices, had fallen fast asleep upon the floor, whence he was raised,

and carried to bed in the arms of his servants. The weeping and trembling Cecilia—for she was both grieved and terrified out of her customary composure—had already obeyed the orders of her mother by retiring to her apartment. Lady Middleton shortly afterwards did the same; but sleep, in the agitated state of her mind, being entirely out of the question, she threw herself into an arm-chair, covered her crimsoned face with her hands, as if she felt that she should never be able to show it again, and, bursting into an agony of tears, remained for a long time overwhelmed with a painful and

CHAPTER IV.

There stands the messenger of truth ; there stands
The legate of the skies ! His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear,
——— by him in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.

COWPER.

GALE MIDDLETON, on the morning after his arrival at Brookshaw, was awakened at an early hour by the twittering of the sparrows, and the sharp whistle of the swallows, whose nests were clustered in the interstices of the scalloped gables, and who were darting backwards and forwards like feathered arrows. The lark too, that Orpheus of the sky, was piping aloft, while the blackbirds and thrushes, which were never suffered to be disturbed in their leafy sanctuaries, were sounding a reveille, and the chanticleer of the poultry-yard, who

had flown atop of the garden wall, sent his shrill clarion up to the windows, as if determined to arouse the newly-arrived master of the mansion. " You are right, my serenading friends," said Gale, as he quitted his bed; " he who resides in the country should conform to the dictates of nature and the habits of the animals by which he is surrounded. Never will he then complain of these melodious matins."

Unavailing would have been the attempt, even had he endeavoured to compose himself to sleep, for the village ringers, without waiting to enquire whether the clangour of their unmitigable bells would be acceptable to the invalid, had now betaken themselves to the belfry, whence they pealed forth a stunning welcome that shook the ancient gables of the lodge, and sent the feathered tenants twittering and screaming through the air, as if inquiring the cause of the uproar. Pleased with this rude greeting, he completed his dressing, and descended to the garden, where he found Robin already waiting for him at the porch. " Heart

alive, master!" cried the latter, "you be 'most too late; the dew will be all off, and there be a cloud coming over the sun. Only to think of your dawdling so! Come along, come along!" So saying, he hurried impatiently along the gravel-walk, his master following at a more tranquil pace, until they reached the peacocks, when the old man, taking the arm of his companion without the least ceremony, placed him in the best position for viewing the leafy sculpture, of which he pointed out the beauties, improvements, and alterations, with an enthusiastic grandiloquent prolixity that we cannot think of inflicting upon our readers.

After having paid his tribute of admiration to these specimens of perverse ingenuity, for he thought it better to do some gentle violence to his own taste and feelings than to hurt those of Robin, he suffered himself to be led round the garden, hearing rather than heeding the prattle of his garrulous companion, who enlarged upon every flower-bed and its prospects for the season, as if he were detailing the eventful history of an empire. While thus

perambulating his own little domain, the feelings of Gale were soothed into a sweetness and serenity to which many causes contributed. A return to one's own home, however lowly or lonely it may be, is always accompanied with gratifying sensations. The morning was bright, balmy, and exhilarating ; the garden, now at the height of its vernal beauty, perfumed the air with the delicious odour of lilacs, wall-flowers, and other aromatic plants ; the bells were ringing a merry peal ; and, in the pauses of their sonorous symphony, the birds stretched their little throats with an increased energy, as if determined not to be outdone. Gale's complacent mood was exalted into a higher and nobler enjoyment, when, upon opening the garden-gate, and passing over the little bridge into the village, he noticed the fervour of unaffected attachment with which he was everywhere greeted. Utterly repudiating that alienation and arrogance of demeanour towards the lower orders, which are but too characteristic of our English gentry, Gale Middleton, naturally affable and benevolent, had always con-

ducted himself towards his rustic tenants with a friendly and earnest courtesy, which, being equally free from the pride that apes condescension and the familiarity that breeds contempt, had won universal regard, without forfeiting an atom of respect. Many there are who inveigh against our impoverished peasantry, as being sullen and disaffected towards their superiors. God knows they have little cause to be grateful! but few who have not tried the experiment would imagine how easily they may be conciliated by the smallest favours, or merely by an ingratiating demeanour.

Scarcely had the "Young Squire" crossed the bridge, when the villagers came flocking around him with bows, and scrapes, and curtseys, and cheerful smiles and welcomes; some congratulating him on his arrival, others inquiring after his health, and a third party, among which the good gossips were conspicuous, intreating to know how his recent accident had happened, and "all about it." Affection and indignation conspired with curiosity to make them so importunate upon the latter

point, that the object of this gratifying sympathy, who saw that widow Stubbs, and the rubicund Master Penfold, the butcher, and Jemmy Sanders, the beadle, and, indeed, the whole rustic conclave, thought themselves, in some degree, entitled to know the real rights of a matter which had been so variously represented, sate himself very good-naturedly down upon a block of wood, beneath an old sycamore-tree, and gave them a succinct account of his misadventure, which he terminated with repeating the assurance that he now felt but little

upon it, completely lost in a profound but apparently a pleasant and soothing reverie.

The sound of the church-clock, dispelling his fit of abstraction, reminded him that he ought to send a gratuity to the ringers, although their musical clangour had given him a headache, which threatened to last all day. Summoning Robin from the garden, he accordingly despatched him with a sovereign for this purpose; but, after the lapse of about twenty minutes, the messenger returned with a simpering and significant air, and, depositing the money upon the table, exclaimed, as he let fall a smart slap upon the thigh,—“Never stir, but I’m glad on’t, that’s what I be! ay, as if my tall stocks had all turned out double, and the yellow-admiral tulips had all blowed without a streak.”

“Why have you brought me back the sovereign?” enquired Gale.

“Why, master, the ringers—(they shall all on ‘em have as many seeds and cuttings as ever they like,)—the ringers do hope no offence, but they be vexed to think that you should think

that they should think of ringing the bells for the lucre of gain, when they did it out of pure love like, respect being had to what's adequate and emblematical. When they be ordered to ring for a wedding, and things be confederated accordingly, they be agreeable to take whatever folks may give them ; but upon this here critical emergency they won't unanimously take nothing."

" Well, well, they shall not eventually conquer me in a contest of love. You may return to your occupations, good Robin ; I well know that your garden labours are your greatest pleasure. And is this the class ?" exclaimed Middleton, when he was once more alone ; " which is reproached with an ungrateful, sor-did, and selfish spirit ? Glad should I be to learn what order of our finical and fastidious gentry could have exhibited more delicacy and disinterestedness. Verily, these peasants have the spirit of gentlemen ; while the well-dressed arrogators of that title are too apt to content themselves with its outward form and sem-blance."

After having rested himself awhile in the parlour, Middleton was about to proceed to the laboratory, which was detached from the house, and fitted up with a complete apparatus for every sort of chemical experiment, when an unexpected visiter made his appearance, in the person of Jemmy Sanders, the parish-beadle. This functionary, scraping his hob-nailed shoe upon the carpet, and making correspondent salaams with his laced hat, advanced about a yard from the door, and then, smoothing down his shock of black hair with his left hand, and protruding a paper with his right, exclaimed with a gruff voice,—“ Hope no offence, Squire, but I ha’ got a letter for your honour, and if there be any faults of spelling, as I wrote it myself, I hope you’ll excuse it, Squire, seeing as how they do always have such uncommon bad pens at the Black Bull.” So saying he deposited on a side-table an awkwardly folded square letter, the wafer of which was yet wet, and made his escape with a clownish precipitation. Having succeeded in obtaining a copy

of this document, we present it to our readers in the original form.

“ TOO SQUIRE MIDDLETON.

“ At meeting of the Ringers and others held at The Black Bull at Brookshaw, The 26 May, Resolv'd unanimously—”

“ That we Do congratilate The Squire On his arrival at The lodge, A'ter The late unhuman and bloody-minded attack, wishing him Elth and appiness To enjoy The same.

“ That we Do Trust The perpetrators of The unheard of willany, of which we have just heard the peticklars, Will be brought To condine punishment, hoping That The guarden angle who preserved your life will often Do The same upon similar occasions.

“ That we Trust The same guarden angle will cause your horn to be exalted, will entail you With blessings, and grant you length of ears accordingly, trusting you will Be korshus of your elth, since a'ter all, I must Take care of 1 self.

“ Resolved That on toosday next, The

whether being shootable, we will mow, make, and carry The Squire's 12 aker field, beyond the dairy copse. Free gratis. For nothing.

"Resolved that on the anyversary of this day a peal of Triple-bob-majors shall be Rung annually, Once A year by—

"God Save The King!

"Singed on behalf of The Ringers and The hole village by me—

"JAMES SANDERS, Beetle."

Too sensibly touched by the affectionate kindness that breathed through this rude address even to be able to smile at its illiterate composition, Middleton could only exclaim, as he finished its perusal—"Here again are ignorance and rusticity, at which the scholar might flout, and the man of the world shrug his shoulders, while neither of them, perchance, might possess a tithe of the true politeness, the gratitude, and generosity, that have prompted this warm-hearted effusion. Even their labour, which is their only property, are these poor people willing to give up to me,

but I will not suffer them to waste for my benefit that which is so essential to their own. Oh much calumniated peasantry of England ! impoverished and oppressed, and then libelled because destitution and ill usage have degraded you, how manifest is it that you want but a little kindness, and a fair remuneration for your labour, to draw forth all the natural goodness of your character, and triumphantly to refute all the aspersions of your slanderers ! Often have I been reproached by some of the neighbouring landlords with underletting my farms and cottages, and overpaying my labourers ; or in other words, with not sufficiently grinding the faces of the poor. For the miserable addition which these oppressors put into their pockets they pay a bitter price, in the certain hatred and malevolence, and the not improbable revenge, of dependents whom wretchedness has driven to desperation. In the trifling favours which I bestow—favours did I say ? away with the proud word ! for the natural rights that I concede to those whom I employ I am repaid a thousand-fold in the affection

and gratitude, which are dearer to me than are all his hoarded treasures to the miser; while they make me a gainer, even in a worldly sense, by imparting an additional security to my property. Strange! that in these perilous times the wealthy wronger of the poor should put his trust in guns, and traps, and sanguinary laws, instead of fencing himself round about with the cheaper and more secure rampart of justice, generosity, and love!"

Our visionary, for such will the maintainer of these strange notions be doubtless termed by many, proceeded to his laboratory, exulting in the thought that he should have leisure to pursue without interruption the chemical studies and experiments to which he was so much devoted. Welcoming his retorts and crucibles, he threw off his coat, invested himself in his fustian jacket and leathern cap, and was presently at work in the completion of some process, upon which he had been occupied before he left Brookshaw. He was rather premature, however, in imagining that he should be left long undisturbed; and yet a smile of

sincere pleasure greeted the intruder who presented himself at the door of the laboratory, and walked in with the freedom and cordiality of an old friend, although their mutual acquaintance was but of recent standing.

His visitant, the Reverend Mr. Hargrave, might still be termed a young man, although the somewhat antiquated fashion of his clothes, and the seriousness of his manner, which at times amounted to gravity, gave him an appearance of being older than he really was. Originally destined for the diplomatic line, he had been induced by some disgust inspired by the nature of his profession, combined with a disappointment in his affections, to quit the path of life that had been chosen for him and enter into holy orders. When, at his ordination, he solemnly declared that he believed himself to be called to the ministry by the promptings of the Holy Ghost, the words were not, as is too often the case, a sacrilegious mockery. Penetrated, even to his inmost soul, with the pure, beautiful, and peace-breathing morality of the Scriptures, he considered the

office of a Christian minister, when undertaken from conviction and conscientiously administered, to be the noblest and the most delightful upon earth. It was at Brookshaw that he first entered upon his labour of love, for such might the performance of his ministerial duties be strictly termed, his very first act affording a welcome proof to his parishioners that they were blessed with a clergyman of no ordinary stamp. Tithes, with all the undignified circumstances of their collection, had always appeared to Hargrave the most painful and derogatory concomitant of the sacred profession ; and as to squabbling and wrangling for their increase, he thought that the holy hucksters who descended to such a sordid contest, however they might add to their income, were sure to forfeit the respect of their flocks, and consequently to lose the means of their ministerial utility, even where they did not entail discredit upon religion itself.

“ My good friends ! ” said Hargrave to his parishioners, whom he had collected at the parsonage two or three days after his arrival,

“I am aware that, in the present state of the agricultural interests, the full exaction of tithe would be a most intolerable grievance. Even in flourishing times, I consider a tenth of the gross produce of a farm to be a most inordinate and oppressive tax upon capital and industry, while it operates as an almost insuperable bar to the investment of money in improvements. I am already so fortunate as to possess a trifling independence, and as I find that I can maintain, in this cheap village, a sufficiently respectable appearance with a very moderate expenditure, I purpose claiming from you only one half of the tithe that you paid to my predecessor; begging you most distinctly to understand, that although this arrangement shall be permanent so long as I remain among you, I do not, and indeed cannot, compromise the rights of my successor, who may not be in circumstances to continue the remission which I have so much gratification in now offering to you.”

This alone would have been sufficient to establish his popularity, which was subsequently

confirmed and exalted by the whole tenour of his truly Christian life. Such a broad, I had almost said such an impassable, line of demarcation, often separates our fastidious, expensively educated clergy from their rustic flocks, that there can be little sympathy and no cordiality between them. Such was not the case with the benevolent and condescending Hargrave. Sufficiently elevated by his manners and attainments to command the unbounded reverence of his congregation, he conciliated their regard by a demeanour uniformly frank and friendly, and by participating occasionally in their occupations. Sometimes he might be seen, soon after sunrise, holding the stilts of the plough in his own field, a healthy occupation, which always exhilarated him with the thought, that, while thus subduing the earth, he was enjoying the noblest of triumphs, in contributing to the support and preservation of his fellow-creatures, whose destruction constituted the sole boast of the vulgar conqueror.

But that which most recommended him to the general love of the lower orders was his anxiety

to promote all their innocent amusements. So far from sharing the ascetical views of those Protestant monks who grudge a half hour's respite to the toiling and joyless poor, and would condemn them to additional austerity and mortification, he delighted to promote their pastimes of all sorts, and was even gratified when, after the performance of their religious duties, they devoted the Sabbath evening to harmless recreations. At their Saturday cricket-matches he generally sate upon the green and kept the score; and he was in-

Even had he not been abundantly rewarded for such brave beneficence by a grateful consciousness of having discharged a duty and diffused happiness around him, he would have found an all-sufficing recompence in its effects upon his parishioners. Looking upon his predecessor, who was in every respect the reverse of Hargrave, as an oppressor, who cared for no interests but his own, many of them quitted their attendance upon church altogether, while not a few swelled the ranks of a dissenting chapel, which had been mainly run up on the strength of the clergyman's unpopularity. Convinced that those doctrines which could form so pure, so disinterested, so exemplary, a Christian as their present pastor, must be superior to all others, the inhabitants of Brookshaw gradually flocked back to their parish-church, and the dissenting chapel was speedily shut up. Few acts of immorality, none of violence or crime, were committed within the precincts of this happy village; and when the greater part of Sussex, almost in a state of civil warfare, was terrified by the daily outrages of the

starving and maddened peasantry, or by the midnight atrocities of the rick-burners, the squire and the clergyman of Brookshaw, in most other places the first objects of attack, having not the smallest apprehensions for their own persons and property, were enabled to leave their homes and assist in the pacification of the disturbed districts. During their absence the villagers, voluntarily associating for that purpose, took it by turns to guard during the night time the stacks and buildings of the Lodge and the parsonage, lest any

CHAPTER V.

Let there be no honour
Where there is beauty ; truth, where semblance ; love,
Where there 's another man : the vows of women
Of no more bondage be, to where they are made,
Than they are to their virtues ; which is nothing :
O, above measure false ! *Cymbeline.*

"WHEN you entered," said Middleton, in answer to Hargrave's enquiries, "I was engaged in analysing the composition of different earths, to which, methinks, our chemical and experimental philosophers have not hitherto paid sufficient attention. Conquering all the other elements, man has converted them into slaves, who minister incessantly to his wants and pleasures. The invisible and impalpable air is made to grind his corn, to waft his vessels across the ocean, either for purposes of commerce or of war, and to answer a thou-

sand other purposes of utility and delight. Of the blessings which fire is made to dispense, let our manufacturers attest the importance and the extent. Water has been rendered not less widely subservient to our comforts. Over the pathless deep the mariner ploughs at pleasure an unerring road, which, marrying the remotest ends of the earth to one another, enriches them with the dower of commerce. From the action of fire upon water has been generated an omnipotent vapour, which, though it has yet scarcely escaped from the cradle of its infancy, already performs, in England alone, the labour of many millions of men; but, upon the element with which he is in more immediate contact, upon the qualities of the earth beneath his feet, man seems to have bestowed less analysis, and to have exercised less ingenuity, than upon any other."

"Because the mere process of tilling the ground is so simple as to be unsusceptible of improvement."

"That is precisely the point upon which I am at issue with our cultivators. If by ana-

lysing different earths we could discover the component elements in which reside the powers of fertilising, germinating, or enlarging, the various seeds or roots that are committed to the ground, we might be provided with the means of accelerating and perfecting all the vegetable operations of nature, so as to give an incalculable increase to her productiveness. We have found how to elicit the latent heat with which the atmosphere is charged ; why may not the same subtle element, the secret germ perhaps of its fertility, reside in the superficial earth, awaiting the hour when it shall be discovered, and applied to the purpose of vivifying the soil into a more exuberant fecundity ?”

“ You may at least hope for success without being deemed a visionary ; but for me, whose province it is to analyse the moral soil, there is little chance of my making any discovery that will very materially increase the crop of its virtues, or sensibly diminish the weeds of vice with which it is overrun.”

“ Alas, I fear not !” said Middleton with a sigh ; “ in that direction there is no prospect of

improvement. Providence has given us the wish but not the power to penetrate its inscrutable designs. In the destiny of man all is dark, all is calculated to inspire despondency, if not despair; there is but little happiness for him in this world, but little hope in the next."

Hargrave, who detested polemical arguments, and who knew the morbid sentiments of his friend upon these subjects, never attempted to discuss them, but always sought to turn the conversation when they had been casually introduced. With this view he suddenly exclaimed—"Nay, I recall my words, and I refuse assent to your positions. I *have* made a discovery, which, so far as I am individually concerned, has increased my stock of enjoyment, and confirmed my belief in the existence of human virtue, and consequently of human happiness. I have found out that there is an angel living in this neighbourhood."

"A female one, of course," said Middleton, with a faint smile.

"You are right, and that I may not keep

you longer in suspense, I will apprise you at once that she lives at Maple Hatch."

"How! what! at Maple Hatch!" stammered Middleton, in vain endeavouring to conceal his agitation. "I thought you did not admire Miss Norberry, that you considered her too masculine in the turn of her mind; that you disliked—why you told me so the very day before I left Brookshaw."

"And I said what I felt and believed."

"Have you then so soon and so totally changed your opinion, that, with a strange, I had almost said discreditable, inconsistency, you can now term the same individual an angel?"

"I think of Miss Norberry as I always did, and I have never termed her an angel."

"Of whom then were you speaking?"

"Of her sister Lucy, whom I had scarcely seen when you left Brookshaw."

"Lucy! I do not deny her beauty, but she is a mere mindless girl."

"Mindless!" exclaimed Hargrave, colouring, "methinks you can have seen as little of her before you went to London, as I had. She

may not possess the masculine understanding of her sister, and I am glad she does not, but I beg to assure you that she is by no means mindless."

"My dear friend!" said Middleton, taking the hand of his companion, who was evidently piqued, "I retract my assertion, and willingly ask pardon for my inadvertent phrase. I was so rejoiced to find that you did not intend—that you were not alluding to—Miss Norberry—to her sister I mean. Certainly Lucy is as handsome as an angel, and if you will do me

"I was not aware that I had mentioned her," said Middleton, and he immediately changed the subject, for though he was really attached to Miss Norberry, as the reader has perhaps already suspected, his sensitive and delicate mind recoiled from any disclosure of a secret which as yet was hardly known, even to himself. There is a respect, a reserve, a fastidiousness, in true love, that prompts the bosom in which it is cherished to conceal it from every eye, and to brood over it with a delight enhanced by the consciousness that it is utterly unknown, even to its object. The passion that is divulged seems to lose some portion of its integrity; and the jealous lover finds a pleasure, though a solitary and a selfish one, in fostering the devotion of his heart, while the idol of his affections is as yet unaware of the silent worship she is receiving.

It was this feeling which perhaps led Middleton, while chatting with his friend after dinner, to discountenance all allusion to Maple Hatch and its inmates, an object which he sought to accomplish by enquiring more

pointedly than he had hitherto done into the history of his companion, especially into the circumstances which had induced him to abandon his diplomatic career and to enter into holy orders.

"It is a tale soon told," said Hargrave, "and I can have no objection to relate it; though I fear it will little raise me in your estimation, when you find that a disappointment in love was the primary cause, subsequently corroborated, as I trust, by higher and holier influences, that led me to become an humble and unworthy member of the church."

"Humble, but not unworthy," exclaimed Middleton. "Oh! if all its ministers resembled you, the church would be very unlike what it is."

Hargrave bowed and continued. "Though I am still in early life, and the event to which I have made allusion occurred some years ago, I was not even then young enough for love at first sight; my heart was not sufficiently inflammable to be immediately kindled by the burning-glass of even the brightest eye. In-

deed I am by nature rather phlegmatic than susceptible, but when once an impression is made upon me it is proportionably deep and durable, resembling in that respect the characters upon Egyptian granite—difficult to carve, but scarcely to be effaced without breaking in pieces the substance that has received them. Disliking despots and autocrats, whether male or female, I refused in the first instance to do homage to the idol which the polite world of Cheltenham, where I was then residing, had set up for flattery and admiration. Nothing is so intolerant as fashion. To dispute the pre-eminence of the season's goddess was equivalent to a denial of Diana at Ephesus. Assailed on all sides as a recreant and disloyal knight, I was assured that her personal charms were her least recommendation; that she was not less accomplished than beautiful, that her head was too good to be turned, that she possessed a warm and rightly feeling heart, and finally I was challenged to submit all these averments to the proof, by being introduced to her, by joining the parties of which she constituted

the ornament and the soul, and by forming a decision upon her merits when I had closer and fairer means of judging than any to which I could lay claim from merely seeing her at a distance.

“ Not only was I bound in candour and gallantry to accept this challenge, but I felt piqued to vindicate my judgment, having a full conviction that a narrower inspection of the general idol would rather lower than exalt my preconceived estimate of her character. Our first interviews confirmed this anticipation. In

myself, not altogether displeased to find my judgment confirmed, ‘she has nothing but her beauty to recommend her. Light, lively, and vacant, she may make an excellent partner in a quadrille, but alas! for the man who selects so pretty but so unintellectual a puppet for the companion of his life !’

“ Nothing occurred to qualify this unfavourable impression, until I heard her sing. When I speak of a young lady’s singing, I do not simply mean that she can warble sweetly like a bird or a flute, or prove the long and painful tuition she has undergone by executing difficult passages with a mechanical precision; but that she can adapt the tone and the expression to the sentiment; that she can touch the feelings as well as delight the ear, and exalt a sensual pleasure into an intellectual delight. To my infinite surprise all this was accomplished in the first song she poured forth. The poetry, the music, and the singing, were alike exquisite, and I ejaculated with some feeling of self-reproach—‘ This girl has a soul; I have done her an injustice, I have decided too

hastily, I must become better acquainted with her before I venture to pronounce a definitive verdict.'

"She herself seemed anxious to promote this object, for I could not but notice that she listened to me with pleasure, and imparted a higher and much more rational turn to the discourse when I was her colloquist, than when she was flirting and coquetting with the common herd of danglers. Never is a man's vanity and self-love so vulnerable as when he finds or

could now listen to with pleasure as a sort of oblique compliment to myself."

"Admiration soon ripened into a warmer feeling, and when I became her professed lover, I saw every thing, of course, through a rose-coloured medium, which imparted a charm even to her imperfections. Captivated as I was, could I then acknowledge that she *had* imperfections? Yes, I was candid enough to admit to myself, not to others, that, like all handsome and much-admired girls, she was *rather* coquettish, and decidedly too fond of rank and title; but this latter weakness was so general a failing with the English, both male and female, that it was hardly fair to expect her to be exempt from it. All my previous impressions in her favour were exalted into an enthusiasm of love by the frank, unaffected, and winning, way in which she accepted the offer of my hand. A bare competency was all that I possessed; but I was willing to throw up my diplomatic appointment at Lisbon, which was indeed rather honourable than lucrative, and to devote myself to the charms and duties of

domestic life in England. Nothing, she declared, could be more consonant to her own desires and feelings; an establishment such as I was enabled to offer, even although it would not include an equipage, was quite as much as she required; and she would much rather depend for her matrimonial happiness upon the affections and society of a sensible husband, than upon the splendour of his household appointments, or the pleasures to be derived from opulence. My proposals being not less acceptable to her friends than to herself, our engagement was soon made public; and as I considered myself to be the winner of a not inconsiderable prize in the matrimonial lottery, I stood with great good-humour the raillery of the wags who delighted to remind me of my former prejudice, and whose jokes and jeers I very complacently set down to the score of envy.

" Before our marriage could be solemnized, it was necessary that I should proceed to Lisbon, not only to obtain the consent of my uncle, from whom I had considerable expectations, but to dispose of some property which

I had purchased in that capital, when I expected to continue an *attaché* to the embassy. True love, they say, is always misgiving; and when I reflected upon the gaiety of Cheltenham, the coquettish disposition which I had observed in my mistress, and the crowd of flatterers and admirers whom not even her acknowledged betrothal could banish from her train, I implored her, in order to remove all anxiety from my mind during my compulsory absence, to ratify our mutual engagement by a solemn vow of constancy. Rallying me on my groundless mistrust, which, as she said, many girls, conscious of their good faith, would consider an indignity and scornfully refuse to indulge, she assented nevertheless to my wishes, and with every appearance of sincerity called Heaven to witness that she was affianced to me as my betrothed wife, and would never, never recede from the contract she had made.

"This ought to have satisfied me; but it did not. Perhaps I was unreasonable. Humility, perhaps, and an unaffected sense of my own inferior claims, rather than any serious doubts

of my mistress, had made me jealous ; but I could not discard from my bosom certain suspicions as to a rich Irish baronet, Sir Mark Galway, who seemed to me more sedulous and earnest in his attentions to Helen than the rest of her attendant satellites, and towards whom, if I mistook not, she had evinced some little predilection before my declared attachment had induced him to withdraw from her coterie. Sir Mark was my friend, I should rather say my acquaintance, for he was too dissolute a character to be received into any degree of inti-

feeling of resentment; ‘and as I have often heard you maintain that every thing is fair in love and war, I hope, my dear Sir Mark, you will pledge yourself not to practise in any way upon her affections during my visit to Portugal.’

“ ‘ What, my dear fellow! do you think I could take advantage of your absence? Do you mean to insinuate—’

“ Forgive me, Sir Mark; but you have proved yourself to be a dangerous and gay Lothario; and as I believe you pique yourself upon your success in these affairs, you should view my present application as a compliment rather than a courtesy.’

“ ‘ I have not sought, nor do I mean to seek any such success at the expense of marriage, and therefore, my dear boy, I will give you the pledge you require with all the pleasure in life. How shall I swear not to run away with your fair Helen, and fire another Troy? Shall I obtest Mars, Bacchus, and Apollo, or Vulcan and the bearded thunderer, or Venus, Cupid, and the doves and loves?’

“ ‘ Nonsense ! ’ said I, ‘ this is no subject for trifling. Call upon Heaven to witness your truth, and promise me, as you are a gentleman and a Christian, that you will not seek to supplant me during my absence in the affections of my mistress.’

“ With a greater air of solemnity than I had ever seen him assume he made the vow, for which I thanked him most cordially, and departed for Portugal with an assured and tranquil heart, in no corner of which did there now lurk one misgiving doubt.

it to state that the perfidious girl, justifying her faithlessness by the sophistical pleas of youth, inexperience, ignorance of her own heart, and so forth, concluded her cold and elaborate epistle by begging that I would consider myself released from our hasty and inconsiderate engagement, since she had agreed, with the sanction of all her friends, to give her hand to Sir Mark Galway. In a transport of rage, and without waiting to communicate my purpose to my uncle, I threw myself on board a merchant-vessel then on the point of sailing, resolved, upon my arrival in England, to expose to all the world the perfidy of my betrothed, and to challenge Sir Mark.

"How thankful am I that the delay of the voyage, calming this jealous paroxysm, allowed better and more Christian thoughts to intervene! 'No,' said I to myself, 'I will not plunge headlong into the folly and the wickedness of a duel. I will leave the forsaken couple to that punishment which they will inevitably entail upon each other, even if Heaven do not chastise them by some judicial

visitation. Our ship was bound to the Thames, but I desired to be put ashore at Eastbourn, meaning to proceed immediately to Falmouth, and return to Lisbon for the purpose of resuming my official station, which I had not yet formally resigned. Scarcely had I landed when I encountered an old and valued friend, the captain of a frigate, who, upon learning my plans, reminded me that the Lisbon packet would not sail for some days, and invited me to pass the intervening time at a marine villa which he possessed in the vicinity. Imagining that society and the necessity for exertion might rouse me from the melancholy into which I had sunk, I accepted his invitation, though I almost repented my doing so when I found, on my arrival at his residence, that the whole household were busied in preparations for a grand ball, which was to take place on the following night. 'I am in no spirits,' said I to my host, 'for talking or dancing, and I had rather therefore not appear at your gala.'

" 'Psha!' said the captain, 'we shall have

pretty girls who will exorcise your blue devils into the Red Sea, and set you whirling in a waltz in spite of yourself. By the bye we expect a beauty from Cheltenham, who has lately jilted one lover, I hear, and is about to be married to another. She is on a visit to some relations at Hastings, who have promised to bring her with them.'

"I felt a thrill at my heart and the blood flushing to my cheeks, when I inquired who this fickle fair one might be, betraying such marked emotion, as my friend pronounced the name of my affianced mistress, that he asked the cause, and I was obliged to disclose to him the very delicate and painful circumstances under which we were mutually placed. 'I had much rather avoid an interview,' said I, 'which must be equally distressing to both of us, especially if there be any chance of my encountering Sir Mark, for I should assuredly insult him, and a duel, which I frankly confess I am most anxious to avoid, would be the inevitable consequence.'

"'As to Sir Mark,' said my friend, 'there

is no possibility of your meeting him, for he is now in Ireland, making arrangements with his lawyer respecting the marriage-settlements, and when he returns to England, he is to betake himself to Hastings, where the nuptials are to be celebrated. And why should you fly from the presence of your faithless fair one, who must be as weak and silly a jilt as she is unprincipled? *You* are the aggrieved and offended party, and it is for her to quit the field if her conscience will not allow her to stand under the rebuke of your silent scorn, for I take it for granted you will not speak to her. Tut! man, never be fainthearted. Many a brave fellow has been jilted before now, and it is much better that you should have discovered the real character of this false-hearted damsel before marriage than after. Positively you shall not leave us.'

"Piqued by my friend's raillery, and not quite incurious as to the way in which she would be affected by my unexpected presence, I consented to remain, though I more than once repented my resolution when the ball-

night arrived. At every fresh announcement of visitants my heart throbbed violently ; I was afraid my agitation would be perceived, and I was glad that the room was almost full before the object of all my anxiety made her appearance. At length I saw her advancing up the chamber, gaily dressed, looking, as I thought, more beautiful than ever, and followed, as usual, by a train of beaux and danglers. As she reached the spot where I was stationed, I bowed to her with a cold and reserved air ; she gave a sudden start on recognising me, uttered a half-suppressed exclamation of surprise, coloured deeply, and then, making an effort to collect herself, returned my salutation with as haughty a look as she could assume, and passed on. That she was confused and oppressed with a deep sense of self-abasement, if not of compunction, I thought I could plainly discover ; but her pride prompted her to conceal her emotions beneath a counterfeited gaiety, and she laughed, danced, talked, and rattled, as if determined to drown her own upbraiding thoughts.

in a whirl of action and volubility. To me it was all evidently and even painfully forced, though I heard many exclaim, ‘What an animated creature! what charming spirits she possesses!’

“‘Well she may!’” sighed a pretty girl; “think what a match she is about to make! a carriage and a title!”

“Alas! thought I, it is for these bawbles that she has made a sacrifice of my happiness, and, as I fear, of her own also. Her present noisy hilarity is nothing but an indelicate and unfeeling bravado. Let her enjoy her triumph while she may. I will do nothing to abash her—I will not dance, lest our hands should meet—she shall not even encounter my eyes, lest their reproaching or unhappy looks should send a pang to her heart.

“I was in the refreshment room, to which detached parties occasionally withdrew, while the dancing continued in an adjoining saloon, when I saw her approaching with some companions, and I passed on to a little unoccupied conservatory that terminated the suite of apart-

ments. As I entered I heard the loud plashing of the rain against the glass, the wailful whistling of the wind, and the roar of the breakers as they lashed the foot of the cliffs immediately beneath the lawn. ‘This,’ said I, ‘is indeed the triumph of luxury and civilisation over nature and the elements. Without, all is midnight darkness, tempest, desolation, and misery ; within, amid festoons of flowers and a meridian blaze of light, I see a sumptuous banquet, beautiful and happy faces, gaily dressed figures whirling in the giddy waltz, while I hear no sounds but those of merriment and music.’

“ Scarcely had I uttered this soliloquy, when the report of a gun came booming sullenly over the wide waters ; there was something sad and sinister in the sound, and I peered through the glass, to see whether I could discern any object at sea ; but all was pitchy darkness. After a brief interval the report was repeated, and as it came in a momentary lull of the storm, methought it seemed much nearer than before. Concluding that it was a smuggling vessel chased by a revenue-cutter, no unusual

occurrence upon this coast, I was contrasting in my mind the situation of the crews, thus exposed to the united dangers of fire and tempest upon the dark deep, with that of the laughing and pampered revellers who surrounded me, when my friend the Captain hastily entered the conservatory, and enquired whether I had not heard two guns—a third sounded, loud and distinct, as he asked the question. I stated my conjecture as to their cause, but he shook his head, exclaiming,—‘No revenue-cutter could get out in such a gale as this;

follow him to the Gap. Joining this party, and leaving the company in the house quite unapprised of our proceedings, I hurried through the raging storm to the Black Gap, where we stood as near as we could to the foaming breakers, lifting up and waving our torches, but without being able to discern any other object than the whitened crests of the nearest surges. ‘A boat! a boat!’ cried the Captain, as a flash of lightning enabled his practised eye to take a wider range over the water. ‘She seems to be making for the Gap. God grant she may not be swamped in the breakers!’ All was again darkness and anxiety; but, after a brief interval, a second flash of lightning once more revealed the struggling boat tossed wildly towards us by the winds and waves. Presently we caught the voices of the people on board, and in another minute she came surging into the Gap, where she filled, but did not upset, so that the mariners leaped into the broken waters, and with the assistance of the Captain, myself, and the servants, were dragged with the ropes that we had provided safely up to

the beach. They stated themselves to be the crew of a vessel from Ireland, bound for Rye Harbour, adding that they had a gentleman on board, as passenger, who, in his hurry to jump into the boat, when the ship first struck, had fallen into the sea, where he had undoubtedly perished.

“ ‘ I don’t know that,’ cried the Captain, ‘ the distance is not so great but that a good swimmer might reach the breakers ; and if he be swamped and washed ashore, there may be yet time, by prompt remedies, to bring him

a supper for them in the kitchen, and in arranging where they were to sleep, an occupation that consumed more time than I had anticipated. Wet and weary, I ascended to the hall, in order to inquire whether my host had returned, when I saw some of the guests running to and fro with looks of consternation and dismay, and others clustering confusedly together around some object extended upon the boards. From the midst of this group there suddenly arose a piercing shriek that thrilled to my very heart, and I rushed impetuously to the spot, whence it proceeded. Heavens! what an awful, what an appalling spectacle did I behold! Stretched upon the floor, with its fixed glassy eyes staring upon vacancy, I saw the ghastly corpse of Sir Mark Galway, the passenger, as it proved, in the vessel that had been wrecked. Beside him, in her gala-dress, lay the fainting girl to whom he was engaged. As I gazed, horror-stricken, upon my rival, and remembered his broken vow, methought he had been struck dead, like another Ananias, for the crime of perjury: and, as the thunder

broke in tremendous peals above the house, and the lightning flashed fiercely through the hall, I imagined that the fair partner of his guilt was about to share the doom of a second Sapphira, and, in the madness of my yet unextinguished love, I threw myself upon her body, as if I would intercept the avenging bolt of Heaven.

" For a short time, utterly overcome by my feelings, I remained insensible; when my perceptions returned, I found that the body of Sir Mark had been removed, in order that it might be subjected to the customary processes for restoring animation, all which, however, proved utterly unavailing. The fair sufferer had been carried up stairs, whence her hysterical screams, mixed with a wild heart-rending laughter, sounded shrilly through the house, drawing tears from many an eye, and carrying anguish to every bosom. Half bewitched at the sound, I wandered perturbedly up and down the gay and garlanded rooms, seeking I know not what, hurrying I knew

not whither. Heavens, what a change ! The sounds of music, merriment, and laughter had ceased, and nought was heard but hysterical sobs, and the voice of wailing, and cries of fear, and the whistling and howling of the storm, all occasionally drowned in the deafening roar of thunder. Around the decorated and deserted supper-table, and from the walls and ceilings of the ball-room, the gorgeous lustres and chandeliers still shed their light ; but there seemed to be something sickly and ominous in their glare, and ever and anon they were quenched by the blaze of lightning, out-dazzling their feeble flames. Oh, what a leveller is terror ! In these moments I saw titled dames scared at the flickering coruscations of their own diamonds ; many a plumed head was extended fainting on the sofas or the floor ; pale was the cheek of beauty, her fear-fraught eye no longer watched by a crowd of admirers, and even her piteous appeals for succour and protection often unheard or unnoticed. Never, never will that terrible night be obli-

terated from my memory. Its effect, at the moment, increasing the previous dejection occasioned by the disappointment of my hopes, plunged me into an hypochondriacal state, from which I sought and found relief in the consolations of religion. In this frame of mind new views and new convictions were opened to me. My conscience could no longer reconcile itself to a diplomatic career, when, as I flattered myself, I could be more useful to my fellow-creatures in the ministry of the Gospel. I accordingly qualified myself for the church, and, shortly after my obtaining priest's orders, was so fortunate as to be preferred to the living of Brookshaw."

"And what became of your faithless fair one?" inquired Middleton, who, from some circumstances of resemblance in his friend's fate and his own, had taken a deep interest in his narrative.

"I know not, and I never inquired," replied Hargrave; "I can cherish no resentment towards one who has been so severely punished for her inconstancy. Motives of delicacy and

compassion have deterred me from mentioning her name even to you, and you will, I am sure, excuse a reserve of which you can so well appreciate the motives. Peace be with her, wherever she may be!"

CHAPTER VI.

Pleased by any random toy,
By a kitten's busy joy,
Or an infant's laughing eye,
Sharing in the ecstasy,
I would fain, like that or this,
Find my wisdom in my bliss,
Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take
Even from things by sorrow wrought
Matter for a jocund thought.

WORDSWORTH.

WHETHER or not some little misgiving still lurked in Middleton's mind, in consequence of what his friend had stated about his frequent visits to the Norberry family, we cannot determine; but certain it is that, on the following morning, he ordered horses to be put to the carriage in which he had travelled from London, and, under pretence of taking an airing,

drove over to Maple Hatch, which was not more than four miles distant from the Lodge. A less eager visitant, especially if he were a lover, although an undeclared and almost an unconscious one, would have waited till his health and good looks were more fully restored, or, at all events, until he had discarded the black bandage from his forehead, before he presented himself to the object of his secret attachment ; but Middleton was not like other men. The real and the intrinsic, the qualities of the head and heart, were the sole objects of his regard ; and, as he cared little for external forms and appearances in others, he presumed them to be equally indifferent to such trifles in himself.

Had he been accustomed to watch his own emotions, the accelerated pulsation of his heart as he approached Maple Hatch might have revealed to him the secret of his predilection. He could not, indeed, be altogether insensible to the pleasure that thrilled through his frame, but, with a strange caprice, he felt disposed to assign it to local influence rather than to the prospect of again beholding and conversing

with the fair inhabitant of the cottage. "Certainly," he ejaculated, "there is something bracing and exhilarating in the air that blows over this healthy common, while the Hatch, with its white front, graceful trees, and well-stocked flower-garden, always presents a cheerful aspect, that must animate the most phlegmatic passenger."

Though little better than a literal cottage, there *was* certainly an air of singular cheerfulness about Maple Hatch, probably from the profusion of flowers that bloomed in the green trellis-work of the windows, which were larger and more handsome than are usually seen in such small tenements. Two noble maple-trees threw their branches over the roof, and the small sloping flower-garden in front, was skirted by a natural thicket of sapling oaks, young elms, and ashes, perforated by a green alley that still retained the name of the Hatch, though no gate or bar now guarded its entrance.

The family by whom it was occupied consisted of four persons. Mr. Norberry, formerly

a drysalter in London, whom Sir Matthew has commemorated as "Surly Sam," was originally afflicted with an irritable disposition, which, being exacerbated by failure in business and the narrow pittance on which he was compelled to live, had settled into a morose querulousness, that continued to increase as every passing year added the infirmities of age to those of temper. Notwithstanding his commercial disappointments, he still possessed in his two daughters blessings that might have been envied by the highest and the wealthiest in the land ; but so far from being sensible of the boon, he always spoke of himself as the victim of unparalleled and unmitigated misfortunes. It cannot be denied that he had one domestic calamity to deplore, in the unhappy plight of an only sister, nearly as old as himself, whose intellect, never very strong, had gradually sunk into a state of almost total fatuity. Aunt Patty, however, for by no other appellation was she ever known, was perfectly good-tempered, and still retained such partial possession of her faculties as to be able to take care of her-

self, and to perform some small portion of the household duties.

Christina, the eldest daughter, whose name was always abbreviated into Chritty, had a well-proportioned figure and a clear healthy complexion, which constituted the sole personal recommendations that a sculptor or a painter would have discovered. In her face there was not one perfectly good feature; yet all admitted her to be pleasing in her appearance, and many thought her to be rather good-looking. In what then, consisted the power of producing to a certain extent the

could not quite discard a professional dislike of those who presumed to think for themselves, especially if they happened to be females, had pronounced the mind of Miss Norberry to be masculine ; a common, but foolish and indefinite phrase, which, if it have any meaning, should imply a compliment rather than the censure which it is often intended to convey. The sex to which we chiefly assign the education of childhood and consequently the formation of character ; the sex intended to be the companion of man, and which in this age of universal reading must necessarily exercise a most important influence upon the literature and manners of society, ought not, according to the notions of Miss Norberry, to be restricted to the attainment of those superficial accomplishments which qualify them to be the playthings, rather than the fitting associates, of the self-styled lords of the creation. For beings to whom such high duties are committed, she did not consider any investigations or any range of study too elevated, though she did not wish them to move from their appropriate

sphere, or to forego any of the customary embellishments of the sex. Neither playing nor singing so well as many of those who had devoted their whole time to such pursuits, she had prosecuted studies and enquiries which might well be deemed a compensation for her musical inferiority. Whether or not they were of a nature to justify, in its invidious sense, the imputation of her possessing too masculine a mind, must be left to the decision of the reader, after her character shall have been more fully developed.

good-humour, which was not less conspicuous in the bosom of her own family than in the midst of the pleasantest society. With a household such as we have been describing, and in circumstances, which, even in the estimation of the moderate, scarcely amounted to a competency, it might have been difficult to maintain such an enviable frame of mind, had not her cheerfulness been grounded upon a great religious principle. To be innocently happy ourselves, and to extend the same enjoyment of existence, as far as possible, to all within our sphere, she believed to be the main purposes of our being, and consequently the most acceptable homage that can be offered by his children to the Universal Father.

" You ask me," she would sometimes say, " why I am always exhilarated, and I answer because I am naturally devout."

Lucy, a brilliant brunette, with an arch expression of vivacity, and a sylphlike figure, was decidedly superior to her sister in personal beauty, though she could not be compared to her upon any other point ; neither possessing

the vigorous, independent, and original turn of mind by which Chritty was distinguished, nor being enabled to compete with her in acquired accomplishments. None could be more ready than herself to acknowledge this inferiority. Unaffectedly humble in her own person, she was yet proud of her sister, whom she tenderly loved, and to whose praises she would at all times listen with much more pleasure than to her own.

With a playful girlishness she laughed at those who paid her compliments, not because she was altogether unconscious of her beauty.

sparkling gaiety and vivacity were, however, very different from the equable and philosophic cheerfulness of Chritty. Lucy's animal spirits, the result of a fortunate organization and high bodily health, would sometimes wear themselves out by their own playful vagaries, and leave her in the dejection that not unusually succeeds to such over-excitement. Chritty's cheerfulness, being founded on a high and holy principle, was not subject to such capricious changes.

No sooner had their visitant been recognised from the parlour-window, than both sisters, in the eagerness of their surprise and pleasure at his unexpected appearance, ran down the sloping garden to welcome him.

"Ay," thought Middleton, as he noticed their flushed countenances and their loose ringlets floating upon the wind, "this is what I like to see. According to the prescribed forms of etiquette, they should have waited till I had been announced by a servant, and then have received me with a frigid formality. How delightful is it to see the heart break

through these cold restraints, and run to meet me with such a friendly greeting!" His own heart sympathising with the cordiality he witnessed, he sprang from the carriage, unmindful of his debilitated state, and warmly pressed the hands that were extended towards him. Amid a thousand tender and eager inquiries, occasioned by his altered looks and the bandage over his forehead, the sisters escorted him to the parlour, which they had no sooner reached, than the father, who sat ensconced in an arm chair, with a newspaper in his hand, pushed

young man of more consequence than an old father. Well—sha'n't trouble you long, if I'm to be exposed to these chilling drafts of air : open door—open window—eugh!"

" You complained just now of being too warm," resumed Chritty, " which was the reason that I threw up the sash ; but perhaps I had better close it again."

" Eugh ! leave it alone ; don't want to be stifled."

" You do not enquire after Mr. Middleton's health," said the daughter, anxious to change the conversation.

" There's no occasion — can see he looks ill—shocking ! Those knocks on the head are ugly things—seldom recovered, let the scull be as thick as it will :—get better at first—take a turn—end fatally. Shouldn't wonder if this did the same — look as if you were going. However, hate all gloomy forebodings, so I'll say no more about it."

" If you wish to resume the perusal of your paper," said Chritty, who knew that her father did not like to be interrupted in that occupa-

tion, "I have no doubt Mr. Middleton will give you leave."

"Eugh! don't care whether he does or not; my own paper, my own house, I suppose." So saying, he readjusted his spectacles, settled himself in his arm-chair, and again began reading the Public Ledger, a journal which he preferred to all others, because it gave an account of all the sales effected by the brokers, with whom he had formerly been in the daily habit of meeting upon the Royal Exchange. While he was thus absorbed, and only delivering himself of a peevish "Eugh!" when he encountered any thing that displeased him, Chritty whispered to her visitant, "You must not mind what my dear father says; he tells all the world they look dangerously ill, but, for my part, I am surprised that you have become so rapidly convalescent after such a frightful occurrence, of which I am most anxious to hear an account."

"Oh do, do tell us all about it!" cried Lucy, drawing a chair close to him.

Thus solicited, Middleton was obliged once

more to recite the particulars of his recent misadventure, a task which he did not regret, since the deep sympathy depicted on the eloquent countenance of the elder sister tended to give him the gratifying assurance that he was by no means indifferent to her, a conviction that filled him with a lively pleasure of which he scarcely understood the source.

Their interviews, before he left Brookshaw, had been tolerably frequent, but they had rarely met except to argue, and still more rarely argued except to differ; although, strange to say, they always separated with an increased respect for the character and a higher admiration of the talents of each other. "How cheerful and bright!" exclaimed Middleton as he completed his narrative; "this cottage appears to me after the dull and discoloured panels of the parlour at Brookshaw."

"I have endeavoured to make it so," said Chritty. "A light clean house conduces in no small degree to the enjoyment of existence, and I never neglect the most minute ingredient that can contribute to so desirable a result."

Thus I always keep the window sills furnished with flowers, which seem to be so expressly formed for our gratification that I never can behold them without feeling grateful and elated; and with the same intention did I select this as our sitting room, because it looks out upon the common."

" Which however," said Middleton, " is rather a dreary object, and, according to the political economists, a most unprofitable one."

" Dreary! unprofitable! I cannot think it so. I delight in a landscape of which nature

ground and the pasture-land of those who have but little other amusement, and no other property."

" Sometimes, however," objected Middleton, " it is the resort of the idle and disorderly, if I may judge by the little troop of gipsies whom I saw tramping across it."

" Nay, I scarcely know how to vindicate these European Arabs; and yet their little tent beside the brook or beneath the tree, the half-naked imps, the tethered, forlorn-looking ass, and the swart oriental faces burnished by the flickering fire around which they are grouped, certainly add to the picturesqueness of the scene."

" I was simple enough to have my fortune told by one of them yesterday," said Lucy. " Nay, Chritty, you need not smile, for I declared at the time that it was merely as an excuse for giving her sixpence."

" And what did the Sibyl prophesy?" inquired Middleton.

" Oh! I paid no attention to her nonsense," cried Lucy, blushing.

"It amounted," said Chritty, "to the usual promise of a husband, who, if I mistake not, was to wear a black coat, and to be several years older than herself."

"Nothing more likely to be realized!" exclaimed Middleton, significantly.

"La! how can you say so?" asked Lucy, colouring more deeply than before. "Surely you are not a believer in such trumpery. I do not know any gentleman several years older than myself, who wears a black coat, do I?"

"Why, yes," said Middleton, archly. "I

gooseberry-pudding?" An answer was given in the affirmative.

"Have you ordered the cook not to boil it so much as the last?"

"No, indeed, for I was not aware that you wished me."

"Eugh! thought as much; nobody attends to *my* wishes."

"I will run and tell her," cried Lucy, and she bounded out of the room, not sorry to have an excuse for hiding her confusion.

"Door open again—thorough draft—might as well be killed outright—eugh!" growled Mr. Norberry, although Chritty had repaired the inadvertence of her giddy sister, even before her father had completed his sentence. His comfort was not destined to be of long continuance, for the door was again opened, a fresh puff of air passed through the chamber, and the irritable old gentleman was about to vent his anger in no measured terms, when he saw that the annoyance had been occasioned by the entrance of his imbecile sister, at sight of whom all his sour temper and surly demeanour

became invariably mollified. "Poor thing! poor thing!" he ejaculated in a softened tone. "Chritty! make her chair comfortable for her." It was an unnecessary order, for his attentive and affectionate daughter had already busied herself in arranging the cushions, and placing the footstool, and opening the little work-table that contained her aunt's knitting materials. Meanwhile the object of her solicitude, a substantial looking person, about sixty years of age, dressed with all the neatness of a Quaker, advanced to Middleton, dropped him a low

no idea the bruise was so large, and so black. Well—nothing so good for it as a pinch of snuff." With these words she swam to her chair, where she was presently hard at work with her knitting.

" How is it ?" inquired Middleton, when Miss Norberry was again seated, " that under circumstances, and in the presence of objects, which most people, even of firm nerves, would find depressing to the spirits, you contrive to be always cheerful, and, I might even say, happy ?"

" Because I am too grateful to Heaven for the blessings I enjoy to sigh for those that are denied to me. Why should any virtuous person be habitually dejected ? The beautiful and majestic earth is beneath our feet, the glorious firmament above our heads, God is for ever round about us while we live, and beyond the grave he has held out to us the promise of an eternal beatitude. Happiness is always to be found, if we will only condescend to pick it up seed by seed. As none of its ingredients should be thought too minute to be gathered and added to our own store, so none

should be deemed too insignificant for distribution to others. Occasions for conferring great benefits do not often occur, and when they do, it may not be in our power to bestow them; but the little services and gratifications which every current day places within the means of the humblest member of society will constitute, if we all throw our share into the common stock, a not inconsiderable aggregate of human enjoyment and mutual good-will."

"Ah!" sighed Middleton, "if all would contribute as much as you do to this public pool of beneficence!"

"I seek not to be a large so much as a frequent contributor. Never do I lose an opportunity of dropping in my medium if



possesses your sunlike talent of diffusing light and cheerfulness wherever you are seen. Few have sufficient discrimination or benevolence to say to every auditor that which it will be most agreeable for him to hear."

" But it is in the power of every one to avoid scandal, sarcasm, and ridicule. Oh ! how would society be improved, if its members, when they cannot utter words of kindness and conciliation, would endeavour to acquire the neglected but inappreciable art of silence !"

" Most delighted should I be," exclaimed Middleton with a sigh, " to avail myself of your secret for acquiring a cheerfulness which has long been a stranger to my bosom ; but alas ! we differ widely in the religious views upon which your system is founded, and in our notions of the final destiny of man."

" Chritty !" growled her father, who had not uttered a syllable during this discussion, " have you dressed the salad ? It must be near dinner-time."

" I will do it presently, it will not require a minute," replied the daughter.

"Thought you hadn't done it; you know I can't eat it if done by anybody else; but nobody thinks of me—eugh!"

At the broad hint thus conveyed, Middleton rose, and prepared to take his leave, when Aunt Patty, swimming up to him, dropping a low curtsey, presenting her snuff-box, and gazing at him with her usual unmeaning smile, exclaimed, "What a simpleton you must be to go away! we've got a gooseberry-pudding for dinner, and nobody makes them like Chritty."

"Poor thing! poor thing!" exclaimed the

cut out by Chritty, who makes every thing for both of us, and for Aunt Patty too, whom she assists to dress every morning, which is the reason that she always looks so tidy. Oh ! you don't know how clever she is. She is obliged to darn all papa's stockings, because he says I make such gobbling stitches."

"Indeed ! your dear sister seems to be quite the factotum at Maple Hatch."

"Oh yes, and all round about it too. Our poor neighbours quite doat upon her : and so indeed does every body."

"I do not wonder at it !" exclaimed Middleton, who, having by this time reached his carriage, shook hands with Lucy, and drove off, thinking of nothing, on his way back to the Lodge, but the intelligence, the amiability, the forbearance, the cheerfulness, and the domestic virtues, of Chritty Norberry.

CHAPTER VII.

M. Jacques.—Monsieur, si vous voulez que je vous dise les choses, je crois que c'est Monsieur votre cher intendant qui a fait le coup.

Harpagon.—Lui, qui me paraît si fidèle ?

M. Jacques.—Lui-même, je crois que c'est lui qui vous a dérobé.

MOLIÈRE.

entailed upon all her lofty hopes, he burst into a horse-laugh, exclaiming—"So much the better ! Glad on't with all my heart—every cobbler stick to his last. What 'ee want to become a woman of fashion for ?—can't make a sow's purse of a silken ear. All stuff and flummery, all vanity and vexation ; let birds of a feather flock together, and every goose stick to her own common :—had 'ee there, Meg."

" I could have borne every thing but your most offensive and unpardonable behaviour to the Duchess," said Lady Middleton, biting her lips to prevent the tears starting from her eyes.

" Hey ! what ! hick ! did I really offer to kiss the flabby-faced flounder ? Gadso ! must have been drunk indeed : rather kiss a new Bath cheese—faugh !"

" I shall never be able to show my face again," said the lady, as she walked up and down the room in inconsolable perturbation of mind.

" Don't want 'ee, Meg :—rather you 'd show your back to these half-starved harridans,

and jail-bird dandies :—had 'em there, hey, hick !"

" After all the pains I have taken, and the expense I have incurred, I am confident the Duchess will cut me," said her Ladyship, talking rather to herself than her husband.

" Hope it won't be cut and come again, though ; good riddance bad rubbish. Got to pay the piper, that 's the worst on't."

" The whole affair will be unmercifully lampooned by that hateful Tom Raahleigh ; the scandalous journals will ridicule us for a month

What makes eyes so red? Haven't been such a simpleton as to cry about it, have 'ee Meg?"

"By your continuing to use that offensive contraction, I presume that you wish me to leave you," said Lady Middleton, with which words she forced her features into a smile, bowed courteously, proceeded to another apartment, and had no sooner closed the door, than she gave free vent to the tears which she had for some time found the greatest difficulty in restraining. Bitterly did she now regret that she had ever been tempted to give this unlucky party; and still more deeply did she lament that she knew not how to escape the disgrace of its failure. What apology should she make to the Duchess—how avoid the ignominy of being struck off from her visiting list, after having made such sacrifices to be enrolled upon it? To avert this calamity there was no humiliation to which her mean ambition would not have stooped; but she neither knew how to act, nor of whom to ask counsel and assistance. By her ridiculous affectation of moving in a higher sphere, she had alienated her

old friends, without conciliating new ones : she had estranged herself from her sister ; and she could think of no one, on whose judgment she could rely in this emergency, except Lady Barbara Rusport, who, having been the first negotiator of the party, seemed to be the most fitting mediatrix for effecting a reconciliation with the Duchess. Besides, she had imposed pecuniary obligations on her Ladyship, which at least entitled her to her good offices.

While thus deliberating with her own sad thoughts, she was joined by her daughter, whose looks betrayed that she had passed an

to Lady Barbara, enquiring at what hour she might have permission to wait upon her, rang for Dupin, to whom alone she would entrust the billet, intending that he should wait at her Ladyship's house and bring back an answer. No notice being taken of her first summons, the bell was rung a second and a third time with increased violence, when one of the under-servants at length appeared, and, in answer to the enquiries of his mistress, declared that Dupin was not to be found.

"Not yet up!" she exclaimed, "go to his bed-room, apprise him of the hour, and tell him I want him immediately." The man left the room, and her Ladyship continued to Cecilia, "Poor Dupin! I cannot wonder at his oversleeping himself; I dare say he did not get to bed till sunrise, for, in the midst of all the vexation of last night's occurrence, I had sufficient presence of mind to desire that he would not retire to rest till he had counted over all the plate and deposited it in his own room. Never did I more strongly feel the comfort of having such a confidential person

about me. Heaven knows ! I had need of some comfort under such distressing circumstances."

Cecilia, who had never troubled her head about Dupin's fidelity, observed that his superior cleverness was his great recommendation, and that no genteel family could do without a French servant of some sort, expressing a hope that they might soon have a Parisian maid. While they were thus chatting, the man who had been despatched to Dupin's room returned with the startling intelligence that the

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated Lady Middleton, "can Dupin have proved a traitor?—can he have robbed us, and decamped?"

"Oh, no; utterly impossible!" cried Cecilia; "those Frenchmen are always honest."

"Where is Sir Matthew?" resumed her Ladyship, "I must see him instantly."

As she was about to hurry up stairs for this purpose, another servant encountered her with information that one of the tradespeople, who was then in the hall, had seen a hackney-coach at the door as he was returning home in the middle of the night; and that, on recognising Dupin, who was assisting to load it, he had declared he was carrying away some of the hired things to a place of security, by order of Sir Matthew.

"Then the villain has indisputably robbed us!" cried Lady Middleton, who knew that her husband had issued no such orders. "He cannot have had many hours' start, and I trust we may yet apprehend and have him hung."

This hope rendering her in some degree insensible to the mortification she might other-

wise have experienced in communicating to Sir Matthew the treachery of her favourite Frenchman, she hastened to his room and blurted it out at once, conjuring him to pursue the offender without a moment's delay, in order that he might be punished with all the severity of the law.

" Hey ! how ! what ?" cried the baronet, redening with wrath, " all the plate gone, and all that was hired too ? A pretty job ! serve 'ee right, Meg !—Told 'ee how it would be !—Glad on't with all my heart and soul, 'cause I hope it will be the hanging of that damned French rascal. This is honest Dupin !—faithful Dupin ! —trustworthy Dupin ! Ar'n't 'ee ashamed of yourself, Meg ?"

" I have more reason to be ashamed of you, Sir Matthew. Had you been sober last night, the party would not have been so riotously broken up, and you might have looked after the plate yourself."

" Had *you* been sober, Meg, the party would never have been given. Had 'ee there—hey-hick !—what !—Well, well, too late to shut

stable when door's stolen ; enough to lose plate, needn't lose temper :—no use to wrangle and jangle."

" I never do either, Sir Matthew," said his spouse, with a smile of provoking calmness.

" No, no, quiet enough ; always smiling, but none the better pleased for that—only the more ill-humour at your heart ; still sow sucks up all the draff—had'ee there ! — hey ! — what —hick !"

" This is not the way, nevertheless, to have Dupin."

" Gadso ! very true. Where's my hat—off directly—shan't mind losing the plate if I can only see the French rascal hung. Throw myself into a hackney-coach, and go to Bow-street. Bad job, bad job ! The devil take the Duchess and all her fashionable harridans ! Needn't say same for all French butlers ; go to old Nick fast enough without my sending 'em :—had 'em there :—hey ! —what—hick !"

Scarcely had the baronet turned his back when the busy Mrs. Burroughs, who by some secret and inscrutable agency contrived to

know the occurrences in every house almost as soon as the inmates, intruded upon Lady Middleton, notwithstanding the earliness of the hour, exclaiming, "Oh, my dear friend, I am so grieved, so shocked, so surprised!—I don't mean at the unfortunate breaking-up of your party last night, though that was bad enough; —was ever such an unlucky *contretemps* as Sir Matthew's appearance in such a tipsy state! —but I am utterly astounded at Dupin's ingratitude and roguery. I do believe I shall never get over it:—such a character too as I had with him!"

be your regular *homme d'affaires*, he did not wait for orders."

At another time Lady Middleton, who, from a conviction of her own superior good management, was jealous of all unsolicited interference in her affairs, would have been offended at this officiousness; but her spirit was now so much depressed by the annoyances assailing her in such rapid succession, that she had no heart to make objections; and, notwithstanding her dislike of her present visitant, she sought her advice as to the best means of propitiating the Duchess, apprising her that she had already written a note to Lady Barbara Rusport. This measure being pronounced the most judicious that could be adopted, the letter was despatched, and Mrs. Burroughs, declaring she would wait till an answer was returned, began to discourse with her usual volubility, "of every thing and other matters," though she made no allusion to her unsuccessful attempt at obtaining admission to the party.

While she was thus benevolently keeping up

her friend's spirits, or rather giving vent to her own, the servant returned with a freezing note from Lady Barbara Rusport, regretting her inability to name a day for receiving Lady Middleton, since she was in hourly expectation of being summoned to the country. As this was ominous of the course likely to be adopted by the Duchess and her coterie, the heart of Lady Middleton sank within her, in spite of her companion's assurances that cards would infallibly be sent in the course of the morning by the Duchess and the major part of the exclusives who had honoured her with their presence.

"Talking of last night," exclaimed Mrs. Burroughs, "I am told the supper-tables were beautiful—*unique*, and I must positively have a peep at them as I go out. *Au revoir*, my dear Lady Middleton, make your mind easy about the little disaster occasioned by Sir Matthew's *étourderie*, and be assured that Dominick will give a good account of the fugitive Dupin and his stolen goods." With these words she took her leave, but, on reaching the

bottom of the stairs, turned into the rooms where the supper had been set out, exclaiming to the servant who followed her, "Dear me, James! it's very handsome, isn't it? Not half the nice things are eaten, I do declare; and your mistress might well desire me to take home some of them for my little darlings, since they will only get spoilt if they are left here." So saying, she loaded the deep double hold of her reticule with bonbons and sweetmeats, stuffed both her pockets with cakes, and left the house, whispering to herself, as she passed along Portland Place, "Poor dear Lady Middleton! it's really a vexatious, a humiliating affair for her; and I don't know when I had felt so keenly the misfortune of a friend. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good:—the pursuit and prosecution of Dupin will be a good job for Dominick; and I have supplied myself with confectionary enough for my little rout next Tuesday."

Indescribable was the anxiety with which Lady Middleton and Cecilia sate at the drawing-room window, watching the arrival of any mes-

senger who might bring tidings of Dupin, but still more desirous to see the livery-servants who might have been ordered to leave cards by some of their fashionable visitants of the last night. None such made their appearance during the whole morning; never had their knocker preserved such a sinister and unwelcome silence; the bell seemed to be a dumb one; even Sir Matthew, who had promised to return, had forgotten to do so. At about five o'clock, however, Mrs. Burroughs once more hurried into the room with a smiling and sign-

coachman, from whom he learnt that he had been ordered to drive to the river-side at Wapping, where Dupin, with all his chests and boxes, went on board a steam-boat bound for France."

"And the steam-boat?" enquired Lady Middleton, half breathless with impatience—

"Sailed, unfortunately, at an early hour this morning, so that I fear it must by this time have nearly reached its destination."

"What, then, is the plate irrecoverably lost, and has Dupin made his escape?"

"I apprehend, there can be little doubt of either fact."

"This is provoking indeed! From your looks, as well as words, I anticipated more satisfactory tidings."

"Surely it must be a satisfaction to you to have employed Dominick; no other man in London would have learnt so much in so short a time."

"Very likely, but when you said nothing escaped him, I made sure of his having arrested the fugitive."

"O dear, no ! he has done wonders, I think, in ascertaining the fact that I have communicated. He never fails in what he undertakes."

"Pardon me : he has not obtained the smallest clue to the villains who assaulted Gale."

"That is the only affair in which I have known him to be completely baffled. The parties to that iniquity must not only possess consummate cunning, but be superior to the temptation of money, or some of them would

be taken of Lady Middleton, either in public or in private, and that, for the sake of disarming the laughers and quizzers, of whom they all stood in awe, the whole affair should be treated as a freak, to which her Grace had lent herself for the sake of deciding a bet. This fiat of the autocratrix was quickly communicated to all those who had witnessed the indignity she had suffered, and all were quite willing to yield implicit obedience to the mandate. Two or three sprigs of fashion, whose high birth was not less unquestionable than the lowness of their purses, and as many titled *roués* of loose manners and straitened finances, would willingly have called upon her, under the mistaken though not unusual notion that because Sir Matthew was a wealthy citizen he must of course be a money-lender; but they knew that it would henceforth be *mauvais ton* to be of Lady Middleton's acquaintance, and, as they considered it much more important to be *in* the fashion than *out* of debt, they determined to face their creditors and to turn their backs upon Portland Place.

On the following day there was to be a fancy fair in one of the fashionable streets for the benefit of a charity, which it was known that the Duchess and some of her friends intended to patronise. Deeming any certainty, however painful, better than so intolerable a state of suspense, Lady Middleton resolved to visit it, and to shape her future course by the reception she should experience. On learning her intention, Sir Dennis Lifford, who had called in the course of the morning, pressed for permission to accompany her, exclaiming, "Oh

remained at home than have suffered Sir Dennis to escort her. Should he witness her discomfiture—should he notice any slights and rebuffs on the part of the fashionable visitants, it was impossible to foresee what injurious effects it might have upon one, who, being himself a member of these circles, might regret his approaching union with a family whom they discountenanced. "My dear Sir Dennis," she exclaimed, in the hope of dissuading him from his purpose, "I quite agree with you; the preposterous trash dressed up for sale upon these occasions forcibly reminds one of the well-known recipe for dressing a cucumber, and affords, it must be confessed, some support to the imputation of our being a nation of shopkeepers. If the charity deserve our support, it should be given in a straightforward way; but no—the mercantile spirit must enter into the transaction; we must have something, however worthless, in exchange for our money; we must make a bargain, however bad a one; and, thus tempted, many ladies will throw away pounds upon the trumpery of a charity."

fair, who would hesitate at bestowing half-a-crown in fair charity."

"Och ! never doubt 'em ! its the ladies always that throw away the cash ; but you'll see how I 'll withstand the temptation, though I never was the boy to be caring about trifles in money matters."

"No, my dear Sir Dennis, I will not put you to the annoyance of accompanying us. Our friend Mrs. Burroughs holds a stall, within which we shall be seated during the whole time we remain ; and besides, I have a com-

seat within the stall appropriated to Mrs. Burroughs, calculating that in this conspicuous position it would be almost impossible to cut her, and that if any such indignity should be offered, it would be easier to make her escape by the passage behind the stalls than to pass through the crowd.

Mrs. Burroughs had made, begged, borrowed, or pilfered enough to deck out a table with toys, gimeracks, and kickshaws of the usual frippery description; and, having bedizened herself with all her feathers, all her gold chains, and all her rings, with an extra-allowance of rouge upon either cheek, she planted herself in her stall, every rustle of her flaunting silk gown seeming to say, "Only come and look how fine I am!"

Lady Middleton, feeling as if she were about to be brought up to the bar of fashionable opinion, and put upon her trial, though she knew not what offence she had committed, seated herself by her side, and awaited her sentence with a beating heart. Not long was she kept in suspense, for she presently saw the

Duchess approaching, accompanied by Lady Barbara, Tom Rashleigh, the Honourable Augustus Fortescue Sidney Clavering, and a large party of both sexes, all of whom had been at the *soirée* in Portland Place. Of course her Grace took the lead, for what degree of familiarity ever occasions precedence to be forgotten in England? Chatting and laughing, and occasionally stopping to admire or purchase, she at length reached the stall of Mrs. Burroughs, when Lady Middleton, flurried for once out of her usual self-possession, saluted

toys, and exclaiming, "Very pretty! exceedingly ingenious!" passed on. None of her train were slow to catch the cue thus distinctly given. Lady Barbara brought her glass deliberately up to her eye, but it seemed to obstruct rather than assist her vision, for she, too, passed on, in apparent ignorance that she had been looking at the friend from whom she had so recently been borrowing money. Tom Rashleigh had a ready joke for the occasion, which he uttered loud enough to be overheard, while the Honourable Augustus Fortescue Sidney Clavering, gazing impudently at Cecilia, lisped to his companion, "Thurely I've theen that girl thomewhere. How thamefathed the lookth! I don't like thothe bluthing girlth, they're alwayth tho thly and thulky."

From the whole party, in short, Lady Middleton experienced a cut direct, too glaring and unequivocal to admit of a moment's doubt that it had been preconcerted. Stung to the quick with a sense of deep humiliation, colouring with resentment, and determined not to expose herself to a repetition of the insult, she seized the

arm of Cecilia, and made a rapid retreat from the fair, to the great relief of Mrs. Burroughs, who had not the smallest wish to participate in the slights shown to her friends, and still less to have her stall rendered unproductive by being placed under the ban and interdict of the Duchess and her fashionable coterie.

CHAPTER VIII.

This looks not like a nuptial.

Much Ado About Nothing.

LADY MIDDLETON'S misadventures, both at the supper-party, and at the fancy-fair, received all the mortifying aggravation that publicity could give them. Tom Rashleigh and the scandalous journals were not idle. Squibs and satires, lampoons and epigrams, followed one another in rapid succession; the wags, the wits, and the quizzers, were delighted to be supplied with so fertile a subject; and the caricaturists furnished additional food for ridicule and laughter. One of their ludicrous figurings represented Sir Matthew and his bacchanalian brethren as so many satyrs dispersing a bevy of nymphs, who were made to assume distorted and burlesque likenesses of

the fat Duchess, the scraggy Lady Barbara, and their terrified companions. Though both parties were included in these attacks, their principal annoyance fell upon Lady Middleton; she could not, like the others, laugh with the laughers, and treat the whole affair as a good joke; *they* were only ridiculed, but *she* was really ridiculous; she had been painfully, not to say ignominiously, foiled and frustrated in all her objects; and *she* felt humiliated in her own eyes, because *she* knew that *she* must appear lowered in the estimation of the world.

pretext, and she could not bear the idea of being out of pocket, now that there was no prospect of her receiving any equivalent. Incapable of deviating from the outward forms of politeness, even towards a person who had conducted herself with such signal ingratitude and rudeness, and against whom she felt keenly irritated, she worded her request in the most courteous language, assigning the great expense of the late entertainment as a reason for her present application.

In the course of the morning Lady Barbara's servant brought an answer, elegantly written on violet-coloured satin paper, enclosed in a pink envelope with a stamped border, and a coroneted seal, and couched in the following terms :—“Lady Barbara Rusport apprehends there must be some mistake in Lady Middleton's note, of which she does not understand the purport. Lady Barbara Rusport has no recollection of having received any money for which she has not given the stipulated equivalent. If she had contracted a loan, her note of hand would of course have been exacted

for it, and should any such exist it will be paid on presentation."

"Fool that I was!" exclaimed Lady Middleton. "Lady Barbara is a fashionable swindler, and I should have known her better than to suffer myself to be thus duped and defrauded. She performed her promise, it is true, by bringing me acquainted with the Duchess; and this, I presume, is the only repayment I shall ever receive. It is bitter indeed to be laughed at as well as cheated, but I must bear up with the more spirit against this double mortification, and at all events I will not allow the Duchess and her coterie to believe that I am annoyed by their insults."

Notwithstanding this show of courage, her mind was haunted with a perpetual apprehension that the occurrences of the last three or four days might exercise a sinister influence on Sir Dennis Lifford, who had confessed himself to be of a vacillating character, and whom she knew to be peculiarly sensitive to the opinions of the fashionable world. She was, moreover, anxious to expedite the nuptials

from her conviction that nothing was so likely to throw her late disappointments into oblivion as to furnish the tattlers with some fresh subject of conversation. By associating her name with that of Sir Dennis Lifford and his noble relatives, she would take her station in a distinguished class, of which all her civic connexions might well be envious, and which would afford some compensation for the slights she had experienced from the haughty exclusives. In these inferences her judgment did not err; but there were no grounds for her misgivings as to Sir Dennis. So far from his evincing any hesitation, he was importunate and even clamorous for the speedy celebration of the marriage, urging the imperative necessity of his keeping his promise with the Earl of Ballycoreen, and joining him in Paris at the stipulated time.

The necessary writings having been at length completed by Mr. Burroughs, the happy day was fixed, and all was once more joyful bustle and preparation in Portland Place. Lady Middleton, resolved to spare no expense that might

give *éclat* and notoriety to the nuptials, issued orders for a sumptuous dinner, engaging beforehand an eminent French cook to superintend the kitchen-arrangements. But the great object of her solicitude was to secure a handsome string of carriages for the procession to the church, and to include in the festive party as many titled and distinguished names as possible. To accomplish this, however, required some little address. Several of her old friends and acquaintance had taken offence at their exclusion from the late party, and she

participating in a wedding and sharing the festivities that succeed it. Her Ladyship had procured it to be rumoured that Sir Dennis, whose wealth and generosity were stated to be worthy of each other, intended to make handsome presents to the bridesmaids ; and that in the evening there was to be a lottery of fashionable French *bijouterie*, to consist entirely of prizes. By these blandishments and attractions, all difficulties were finally overcome. The two tall raw-boned daughters of Lady Gauntley, and the two dimpled dumplings of Mrs. Curzon Chilvers, were to be bridesmaids ; the marriage *cortège* was to comprise the travelling chariot of Sir Dennis Lifford, and the carriages of Sir Matthew Middleton, Lady Selina Silverthorpe, Lady Gauntley, Mrs. Curzon Chilvers, Mrs. O'Gorman French, and Lord Arthur Fintown, the last-mentioned nobleman joining the party as the friend of Sir Dennis. Here were the equipages of a Lord, two Baronets, two titled ladies, and two female commoners, both of whom, however, had genteel double names. It certainly sounded imposing ;

Lady Middleton was delighted with her success; and, as she was too philanthropic to confine her satisfaction to her own bosom, she suffered it to transpire and be shared by the public through the means of sundry newspaper paragraphs, which gave punctual intimations of all the pending arrangements.

Sir Dennis, who now dined daily in Portland Place, made greater progress in Sir Matthew's favour during the week that preceded the nuptial day than he had ever done before. The alderman, to his equal amazement and

he should be a warm adherent of that party ; and, as he had never been in the habit of measuring his phrases, he often spoke of his opponents in terms of great bitterness and abuse. But his bark was worse than his bite, and the kindness of his disposition was so well known, that none of those who differed the most widely from him in politics would have hesitated to apply to him for any favour which it might be in his power to bestow. There was an honesty even in his open advocacy of corruption and abuse ; and as to his religious notions, he shared them with so large a class, that, however they might be deplored as uncharitable and even unchristian, their maintenance need not subject him to the imputation of being a whit more narrow-minded than many of his neighbours.

Not less affectionately attached to his son on account of his many amiable qualities than proud of his various attainments, though he often affected to undervalue them, he bitterly lamented to Sir Dennis that Gale should be a vehement Reformer, it might almost be said a

Radical, while he himself, an old staunch Tory, and consequently the real friend of our glorious constitution in church and state, was of course a Conservative and an Anti-reformer. "Why then indeed now, Sir Matthew," cried his toping companion, for this conversation commenced with the fourth bottle after dinner, "it does the heart of my soul good to hear you, and if possible increases my respect for you, for those sentiments are quite entirely, every bit of them, my own. Och ! it's the ruin of us all this cursed reform will be, and the revolutionizing of the whole land, and the death of the constitution ; and perhaps the murder of all the loyal Protestant inhabitants of our free and happy country, if the blessing of God don't send all the Whigs to the devil."

"Very true, very true ! never heard more sensible remark. This cursed bill send every thing to rack and ruin : all go to dogs. Never mind—no use fretting—what says song ?—Too much care make an old man grey—fill glass—bumper toast—confusion to the reforming Whigs—hey !—what—hick !"

" Ah ! now my dear friend," said Sir Dennis, tossing off his bumper, and following the example of his companion by immediately refilling his glass, " if the creatures had only shown the smallest necessity for this murderous measure, devil a bit would I have objected to it. But who wanted it ? Is it Ireland that wasn't flourishing under the old system ? Ah ! then, don't I know the contrary by the example of my own family, who got their title, and estates, and their money, by means of these very parliaments that they're now wanting to pull to pieces. Didn't my grandfather build forty-shilling cottages for freeholders, and buy up others by scores and hundreds, and become a mighty jobber at elections, until he got into parliament himself—it's the Irish parliament I speak of—and was made a baronet ; and, being always a loyal Orangeman, ever ready to draw his sword against papists and rebels, and to drink protestant ascendancy toasts, and the glorious memory, up to his knees in blood if necessary, didn't he obtain a large grant out of a forfeited estate in Galway, and rebuild

the old castle, where we have flourished ever since?"

" Clever fellow that — knowing hand—sly fox—warrant knew a trick or two. Chap that won't take care of himself take care of nothing —charity begins at home;—make money by your country, and you love your country, of course ;—can't be a patriot unless you're rich ; —poor fellows all rascals and radicals ;—'spose we drink your grandfather's health ;—none but a fool refuse to run for a halter when they offer him a cow—hey !—what ?"

else, wasn't there always plenty of fat livings and nothing to do for them in the church? And yet they pretend that Ireland wasn't flourishing under the system!"

"Lying rascals—stick at nothing—don't scruple to say the same of England—and yet look at me, and many others of the same kidney. Haven't I, like your grandfather—monstrous clever fellow that!—made a fortune, and thereby benefitted country by the very borough-system which these revolutionary jacobins are overturning? Asses! — Shouldn't throw away clean water 'fore they've got dirty. Pull an old house on their own heads. All starve together. What'll a reformed parliament do for us? No wars—no loans—no contracts—no jobs—no snug commissions—no loaves and fishes—no pickings and lickings—all as poor as church-mice. The constitution gone, tell'ee, utterly gone—Parliament as it was for *my* money. I like corruption—something to be got by it—love me, love my dog—fill glass—hey!—what hick!"

"Indeed, and you may say the constitution's

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GALE MIDDLETON.

gone, when raggamuffins and rascallions are to have an interest in elections. Ah ! I've a mighty contempt, and always had, for the lower orders and the democracy ; but the biggest evil of reform, and that which goes to the very core of my heart, my dear Sir Matthew, is the injury that it threatens religion."

" Fegs, Sir Dennis ! there we agree again. What's a man without a religion :—why, a beast—baboon—blackguard ; wouldn't give a curse for him. Sorry to tell 'ee, haven't been so devout myself as ought. Busy life—hurry-

I flatter myself I'm as good a Christian in that respect as any in the world, not even barring yourself."

" My dear fellow," cried the alderman, in the maudlin fondness generated by incipient intoxication, " happy to have such a—hick!—tip us your fist—fill glass—happy to have such a real patriot and truly religious—hick!—for son-in-law—'spose we drink his health—hey!—what—hick!"

" And is it I, my darling, that wouldn't be proud and mighty glad to have such a disinterested friend of his country, and firm lover of piety for my father-in-law? Och! then, it's delighted I am!" Sir Dennis returned his companion's cordial shake of the hand, both parties refilled their glasses, a sixth bottle was produced: Sir Matthew growing warm in his abuse of jacobins, levellers, and reformers, drank bumper after bumper to cool himself, until the words came thick from his mouth, his ideas got confused, and the bottles and glasses began to dance a minuet before his eyes. His brother-conservative having confined himself to claret, was not so completely fuddled,

but, as his religious zeal gathered fire from every fresh bumper, he at last began to stammer forth and reiterate with more vehemence than distinctness the words, "Pope—radical—devil."

"Capital fellows!" hiccupped the alderman: "'spose we drink—'spose we drink their their healths—capital—hick!" The pious and patriotic alderman fell back in his chair, and was snoring in a minute, while his worthy compeer and competitor rung the bell, and, with the assistance of the footman's arm, made

himself to be a potent drinker, a firm upholder of church and state, a strenuous advocate for things as they are, and a decided anti-reformer. Poor Ned Travers, for whom he had always entertained a strong partiality, soon vanished from his recollection ; and the thought that Ciss had not only a great probability of being a countess, but a certainty of possessing a toper, a tory, and an anti-reformer for her husband, filled him with unusual spirits, and rendered him not less impatient than was Sir Dennis himself for the celebration of the nuptials.

Both Lady Middleton and Cecilia felt that as Mrs. Burroughs had been the means of introducing Sir Dennis to the family she ought to be invited to the wedding ; but then it was also felt with equal poignancy, that, as she was only an attorney's wife and a person of no distinction, her name would rather vulgarise than give *éclat* to the party, while the idea of a glass coach in the procession was not to be endured for a moment. By way of compromise between proprieties and appearances, it

was settled that herself and her husband should be invited to the dinner, an arrangement which was by no means satisfactory to the lady in question, whose prying, busy, and meddling disposition would not allow her to brook this exclusion from the marriage-ceremony. Shrewdly divining its cause, she betook herself to a coachmaker in Long Acre, for whom she had procured two or three orders, and who, in return, for Mrs. Burroughs did nothing for nothing, supplied her gratuitously with second-hand carriages and post-horses for her occasional

Her Ladyship, however, did not consider the name of Mrs. Burroughs sufficiently *distingué* to be admitted into the newspaper paragraph announcing the nuptials, which, after due consideration, was drawn up in the following form.

“ Yesterday morning Sir Dennis Lifford, Bart. of Castle Moila, County Galway, led to the hymeneal altar the only daughter of Sir Matthew Middleton, Bart. of Portland Place. The Misses Gauntley and the Misses Curzon Chilvers were bridesmaids, besides whom there were present at the nuptials Lady Gauntley, Mrs. Curzon Chilvers, Lady Selina Silverthorpe, Mrs. O’Gorman French, and Lord Arthur Fintown. After the ceremony, the happy couple set off for Paris, intending to pass the honeymoon with Sir Dennis Lifford’s uncle, the Earl of Ballycoreen, to whose title and large possessions he is expected to succeed. In the evening Sir Matthew and Lady Middleton gave a grand dinner to a large party of fashionable and distinguished friends.”

It had been arranged that Gale should come up from Brookshaw to be present at the cere-

mony, which it was his full intention to have done, notwithstanding his dislike of Sir Dennis; but a relapse, occasioned by his having thrown himself into the water to save the drowning child of a peasant, brought on so many alarming symptoms, that his medical attendant peremptorily forbade his undertaking the journey. Sir Dennis could not listen to any deferment of the ceremony, and it was therefore determined that it should take place on the day originally fixed.

Being but little versed in the *arcana* of

of garlanded maypoles, around which the two little plump Misses Curzon Chilvers were about to dance, while their respective mammas looked very smirking and significant ; and that the rest of the ladies were all smart and smiling. Gorgeous were the massive gold chains, and glittering the rings of Sir Dennis, whose perfumed locks and umbrageous whiskers, always the tender objects of his especial solicitude, had been curled and arranged with a consummate care worthy of the occasion. Sir Matthew, with his chocolate coat, white waistcoat, rubicund good-humoured face, and powdered hair, presented a portly and pleasant appearance ; while his gleeful cackling, “ Hick, hick ! ” or loud hilarious triumphant laughter diffused cheerfulness through the whole party. Lord Fintown, looking as arch as his unmeaning face would allow, endeavoured to banter the bridesmaids, as they assisted to cut up and envelope slices of wedding-cake ; Lady Selina Silverthorpe admired Sir Dennis’s travelling carriage, which was waiting at the door ; and Mrs. O’Gorman French, having expressed a vehe-

ment admiration of every thing else, followed the example of the bridegroom, by standing before a pier-glass, and admiring herself.

As the carriages made their way towards the church a trifling incident occurred which was unnoticed by any but Cecilia, on whom it produced a somewhat dispiriting effect. At the corner of one of the streets her eyes encountered for a moment those of Ned Travers, who had stationed himself against a wall to see the procession pass. On perceiving that he was recognised, he coloured deeply, and immediately disappeared; but not without awaking a regretful feeling in the heart of the bride, as she thought of the pang which her marriage might occasion in the bosom of her modest and meritorious admirer, of whose worth she became the more sensible now that she was about to lose him for ever. Nor was this impression diminished, when she observed that her mother wore the necklace given to her by Travers. It struck her that there was some indelicacy in her doing so on the present occasion, but she had not penetration enough to detect that Lady

Middleton's boasted refinement was that of manners not of feeling.

In his undisguised contempt for all vulgarians, Sir Dennis would gladly have disappointed the gaping populace by driving to the side-door of the church and alighting at the vestry; but as Lady Middleton, who was now in her glory, desired to give all possible publicity to an alliance which was to elevate her family in the opinion of the world, she insisted that the carriages should set down at the front gates. By this arrangement the gazers, who were rather numerous, had an opportunity of seeing and passing their comments on the party as they proceeded into the church, which they entered a few minutes before the appointed time. As the clergyman had not yet arrived, they were escorted by the clerk into the vestry, and requested to sit down till they should be summoned to the altar. Either the reverence inspired by the sacredness of the edifice, or the solemn nature of the ceremony about to be performed, seemed to have checked the tongues of the whole assemblage,

for, with the exception of a few inaudible whispers, there was a silence of two or three minutes, which was broken by Sir Dennis, exclaiming, “ Ah now ! Cecilia dear ! don’t you think you would look better if this curl was brought down a little lower upon the cheek ? Excuse me—there !—sure it ’s a million times more becoming. Not a looking-glass in the room—most uncawmonly extr’or’nary—pon my honour ! ” As he drawled out these words the door was hastily thrown open, but, instead of the expected clergyman, a tall, attenuated,

brious epithets; while his victim, who offered no resistance, in vain struggled to escape from his sinewy grasp. Struck aghast by this inexplicable and appalling outrage, the bride sunk fainting into her mother's arms; screams of affright burst from some of the females, while the others, following Sir Matthew and Lord Arthur, rushed forwards to inquire the cause of this atrocious outrage. On reaching the spot, they found Sir Dennis in the hands of two Bow Street officers, who forced manacles upon his wrists, hurried him into a hackney-coach that was in waiting, and immediately drove away!

CHAPTER IX

For the man

Who in this spirit communes with the forms
Of Nature, who with understanding heart
Doth know and love such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred, needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love
So deeply that unsatisfied with aught

the servants who had accompanied him, and sent back the carriage in which he had travelled from London. His moderate income, after deducting his extensive charities, was not only inadequate to any permanent increase of his establishment, but he really felt his sense of manly independence lessened, both in his own person and in theirs, when obsequious menials were perpetually fidgeting about him to discharge those little offices which he held it more dignified as well as more decorous to perform himself.

Honest old Robin and Madge his wife were still more delighted than their master at the dismissal of the strangers. "Dear heart!" cried the former, rubbing his hands, "how glad I be that them Lonniners be gone! They weren't like servants, were 'em, Madge? nothing adequate and identical about 'em; I hate such ignorant and idiomatical creatures."

"Ay, and a pretty joke for them to talk of taste," cried Madge, "when they had the impudence to tell me I didn't know to dress hash mutton, and asked me to make it into a curry,

and then laughed at me, because I said I never heard of people currying any thing except a horse."

"Zooks! Madge, but I wouldn't let 'em domicile over me in that way, the jesuitical, succulent animals! Never stir if either on 'em knew a bulb root from a young potato, nor the names of the commonest plants and flowers in the garden. One on 'em called sparrow-grass, ass-sparrowgrass—like an ass as he was; and cowcumbers the t'other called coo-cumbers, as if they were pigeons or doves. What can

cared for nobody but himself, and hated going from home, though he was never happy in his own house, the family would not soon have returned Middleton's visit ; but Chritty, whose benevolent disposition made her scrupulous in observing all the forms of neighbourly politeness, and who felt, moreover, a deep interest in the health of the invalid, pressed so urgently the necessity of going over to the Lodge without delay that her father assented with his usual ungracious—“ Eugh ! always worrying me to be gadding somewhere or other, though you know I hate tramping about ; but nobody cares for *my* comfort.”

“ Nay, my dear sir, I was particularly requested by Mr. Hoskins to get you out of the house as much as possible, since he thought you would be benefited by a more frequent change of air and scene.”

“ Eugh ! all alike, those apothecaries ; finds his boluses won't cure me, so sends me out to gulp the wind. Ar'n't a cameleon. Same air, I suppose, on one side the common as t'other. Ar'n't a fool—humbug !”

"But if you derive no benefit from it yourself, I am sure that a little drive will do good to dear Aunt Patty."

"Will it? Poor thing! poor thing! let's go by all means. I've no objection; wouldn't signify if I had; nobody cares for me. Go directly if you like—I hate to be worried: why make such a fuss about things?"

Notwithstanding her protestations to the contrary, Lucy cherished a lurking confidence in the gipsy's prophecy, and, thinking it not unlikely that if she went over to Brookshaw Lodge she might encounter a certain gentleman in black, some years older than herself, she learned the tidings of the projected visit with great glee, and ran skipping to her room to put on her bonnet; while Chritty, who had previously procured a conveyance for the occasion, went to assist her aunt in preparing herself, and to see that she was provided with a warm shawl. Having stated that Chritty procured the conveyance, our strict regard for veracity obliges us to confess its nature. Gentle reader!—no, we need not propitiate the gentle:

—genteel and fastidious reader, if by any such we are perused, we beseech thee to discard for once thy worship of appearances, and not to be immeasurably horrified when we whisper in thine ear that the carriage in question was a taxed cart, freshly painted of a dark green, and drawn by a respectable little horse; but nevertheless a bona fide taxed cart, belonging to Master Saxby, the miller, a near and very friendly neighbour, who was always delighted to accommodate the “charming young ladies,” as he called Chritty and Lucy, with the loan of his vehicle.

“Eugh!” grunted Mr. Norberry, as he took his seat and the reins, with his sister beside him, and his two daughters on the bench behind; “going to be a wet day I see—soaked to the skin—catch our deaths of cold—always ~~the same~~, when I go out.”

“Indeed, papa, it is only a passing cloud,” said Chritty; “see, it is gone already, and here is the bright and pleasant sun again! It will be a beautiful morning.”

“Oh, very! we shall be half-roasted, I see,

and smothered with dust. Never any fine weather in this country."

Lucy was in high and happy excitement during the drive to Brookshaw ; but, though her exhilaration partly proceeded from the hope of meeting Mr. Hargrave, it might rather be termed a sensation than a sentiment. She rattled and laughed from the spontaneous irrepressible exuberance of animal spirits ; her heart, like a bird in its summer nest, sang for very glee ; nor did this ebullient joyousness receive a check until, on perceiving some horse-women at a little distance, she exclaimed, with a look of chagrin, " Good gracious, Chritty ! here are the Miss Talfords on horseback, with a livery-servant behind them, and they will see us riding in this vulgar taxed cart ! Was ever any thing so provoking ! "

" For shame, Lucy !" was the reply ; " how can you be so silly ? They know that we are poor, and if they are proud enough to think worse of us for riding in a vehicle adapted to our circumstances, we had better drop their acquaintance, and pass them as we would any

other strangers. If they do not cherish any such feeling, and you are still hurt at meeting them, the pride must yours, not theirs."

" But a taxed cart is so shockingly vulgar."

" Ridiculous! may it not be still more vulgar, dear Lucy, to imagine that there can be no gentility without riches, equipage, and fashionable appearance? I know not a greater vulgarity in the character of the English than their contemptible fear of being thought vulgar."

" Well, Chritty, you may be very right in point of argument, but it is not every body who possesses your good sense, and one does not like to be thought ungenteel, however erroneously."

In accordance with this feeling, Lucy dropped her glove as their friends passed, and by stooping to recover it, contrived not to be seen by them. Chritty nodded and spoke to them familiarly, and received, in return, a smiling recognition.

" Eugh!" exclaimed Mr. Norberry, " I think those girls might have stopped to ask

us how we were ; but I 'm down in the world now : nobody shows any respect to *me*."

" They checked their horses, sir ; but, as you did not draw up, they rode on."

" Draw up ! arn't going to humble myself before *them* ; knew their father when he was only a clerk in the city : stupid fellow, but—born with a silver spoon in his mouth : nobody so unlucky as I am :—eugh !"

On their arrival at the Lodge, Middleton recognised the visitants from the window, ran out to meet them, and, greeting them with a

her sparkling eyes, vivacious gaiety, and the frequent laugh that disclosed her brilliant teeth, seemed to intimate that the gipsy's prophecy might be fulfilled without putting any very painful restraint upon her inclinations. While the party were engaged in pleasant chat, Madge, who had complete management of all the household affairs, and who piqued herself upon keeping up old country customs, entered the room with cake and wine on a waiter, which she handed to each of the guests with a profound curtsey. Mr. Norberry, who liked these old-fashioned tokens of hospitality, helped himself to a bumper and a liberal slice of cake, exclaiming, as he tasted the former, " Ha ! good Madeira—some of old Jemmy Gale's London-particular that he sent twice out to India—swear to it any where—found it here when you took possession, didn't ye? Eugh ! bad cake—too many seeds—not half so good as what Chritty makes."

" Nobody does anything so well as Miss Norberry," cried Middleton.

" You refute yourself," said Chritty, " for

you completely eclipse me in paying compliments. I rather pique myself upon my cakes and puddings, but I am a very bad hand at flattery."

After the conversation had continued some time, the master of the mansion, who, like all country gentlemen was fond of showing his improvements, proposed a stroll round his grounds, a suggestion that met a glad assent from all but Mr. Norberry, whose indolent habits had given him a special abhorrence of being dragged over grounds and gravel walks. "Eugh!" he once exclaimed, in answer to an

the shrubbery and plantation that clothed the slope behind the house.

Among the winding umbrageous walks made through these groves, rustic alcoves had been erected here and there for the accommodation or shelter of all who might seek these pleasant shades, to which the public were admitted without discrimination during three days in the week. "The remaining four," said Middleton to his companion, "are sufficient for my purpose, when, in those gloomier moods to which I am unfortunately subject, I can betake myself to solitude, and enjoy a total sequestration from my fellow-creatures."

"Enjoy!—away with that misanthropical sentiment, and remember that you are condemning yourself not others, when you confess that you are better fitted for solitude than society."

"I acknowledge it—I do condemn myself; but, when I am infected with spleenful thoughts and hypochondriacal dejection, is it not better to retire from the world, lest I should spread the contagion to others?"

"No; this is to confirm by indulging the selfishness of sorrow. Instead of infecting others with your melancholy, they would enliven you with their cheerfulness. Every one who loves his species should reflect that to live *for* them he must live *with* them. Social intercourse is the great civiliser and improver."

"I do but occasionally enact the hermit, and only when I am under the influence of sombre and distressing convictions, which you, I know, do not share, but which I have in vain endeavoured to shake off. Though you may condemn the purpose to which I sometimes appropriate these congenial shades, I venture to anticipate that you will praise my picture-gallery, upon which we are now about to emerge."

"Your picture-gallery! I knew not that you possessed one."

"You will recognise it as we pass through these fields, to every one of which I have endeavoured to impart a pictorial character, and, by diversifying them, to give to the whole

the semblance of a glorious gallery. Some you will perceive are light, open, and airy ; others sylvan and umbrageous ; but all cheerful and gay, for I have suffered too much myself from gloomy feelings to wish to awaken them in others."

"So philanthropic and yet unhappy!" exclaimed Chritty.

"Where there were beautiful trees," continued Middleton, "I have cut down the underwood, that they might be seen to more advantage, and sometimes made the footpath meander, that they might be presented in more than one point of view. It is the winding of our roads that renders our English scenery so superior to that of the Continent, where an object, however beautiful, is like a picture which when once seen, is seen for all : whereas the same object in England would rather resemble a statue, which you may walk round, and make it assume a variety of beautiful attitudes and combinations. Pray admire the contrast, or the harmony, of colouring that I

have endeavoured to introduce into my hedges, by presuming to guide the great artist-hand of Nature."

" I begin to catch the idea as well as the beauties of your picture-gallery, and admire not less the taste that has governed, than the benevolence that dictated, its formation. These are imperial arts, and worthy kings!"

" It has cost me very little; for all simple, natural pleasures, which are ever the purest and the best, are at the same time the cheapest. Having the green for sports and pastimes, and this range of fields for their evening's promenade, I find that the villagers have nearly deserted the alehouse where they formerly used to congregate."

" I wonder not that you have rendered them more moral and temperate, for you have awakened a sense of beauty in natural objects, and the good and the noble are naturally elicited by the beautiful. The exhibitions, the collections, the libraries, calculated to diffuse this salutary impression, are mostly confined to the rich. You are the first who have opened a

gratuitous picture-gallery for the poor ; and if others would follow your example, they would do much towards elevating the taste and polishing the manners of the lower orders."

" I can assure you that some of my Brookshaw peasants have already become amateurs of the picturesque, and will discourse earnestly, if not learnedly, upon the merits of these different fields and views."

" And without knowing your rustic connoisseurs, I venture to pronounce that they are better as well as wiser men than they were. It is a favourite theory of mine, that when the moral and physical systems are more completely harmonised, towards which consummation I believe all things to be indisputably advancing, the beautiful and the good will always be found in accordance. Even now the good qualities of the head and heart are generally united, for virtue is only practical wisdom ; and the time will perhaps come, when mental and personal loveliness will be equally inseparable."

" Do you not think that, to a certain

extent, this period is already arrived? An amiable and intelligent expression, which is the visible beauty of the mind, is at the same time the greatest ornament of the face. Who that gazes, only for a moment, upon Miss Norberry's, can fail to perceive in that highest species of exterior comeliness the bright and faithful reflection of interior virtue?"

"Nay, nay, this is unkind," said Chritty, slightly blushing, "by condescending to reason with me, you were rendering such grateful and welcome homage to my mind, that I did not

spectators. It has been urged by some, that the English are so uncivilised—so barbarous, that, far from appreciating any favours of this sort, they will mutilate and deface the beauties of nature or specimens of art to which they are allowed free access. Seldom, however, has the experiment been tried, and its very rarity ensures its partial failure, for the vulgar must be familiarised with objects of taste before they can understand or respect them. I have been given to understand that the mutilation of the monuments in Westminster Abbey, which is often adduced as a proof of the barbarism of the lower orders, and a reason for excluding them from all our public buildings, is entirely attributable to the young *gentlemen* of Westminster School, the sons of the rich and the aristocratical."

"What public buildings," said Middleton, "are appropriated to the uses of the modern poor? Amid the stately edifices that surround them, our lower orders behold none that have been constructed for their own accommodation but the prison and the penitentiary; or the

poor-house and the hospital, in which so many of them are destined to end their days."

" And from all private mansions and parks they are generally shut out with an offensive jealousy. Wherever our gentry find an open boundary they set up fences and palings, or dig ditches and trenches; where there were walls already, they raise them higher; they love to fortify themselves behind iron spikes and broken bottles: while some, I am sorry to say, will not be contented with any barrier less effectual and destructive than steel-traps and

l intercourse with the politer classes.
ociability between the two would initi-
contemptuous haughtiness of the one,
the ruggedness of the other, exalt and
ise the whole community.”

CHAPTER X.

Since benevolence is inseparable from all morality, it must be clear that there is a benevolence in little things as well as in great; and that he who strives to make his fellow-creatures happy, though only for an instant, is a much better man than he who is indifferent to, or, (what is worse) despises it.

PELHAM.

frittering and gamboling around Hargrave
a spirit of light and joy, she ran hither and
ther to pluck flowers from the hedge, or to
take some new view; and then, returning to
companion's side, and condemning her
girlish frolics, she would protest, with a
sighed look, that she meant to be serious
at least five minutes, and would forthwith
begin discoursing with a mock gravity, gene-
rally bounding off before the conclusion of the
prescribed term to follow some new vagary.
“Heavens!” exclaimed the delighted Har-
riet, “how could Middleton apply the term
‘childless’ to this gifted girl? Because she
possesses the innocence and gaiety of a child,
as presumed that her mind must be puerile.
Never was he more mistaken. Hers is indeed
perpetual sunshine of the breast; who can

she comes in contact, for never have I myself felt so joyous as to-day, and never have these fields appeared half so attractive to me."

Chritty and her companion were returning by another path towards the village, when they heard cries and screams, and Middleton, rushing down the slope towards the river, beheld a boy who had fallen into the mill-dam, and whom the current, rendered unusually strong by recent rains, was hurrying towards the wheel, where he must inevitably be submerged and probably killed. Aunt Patty, having strolled to the dam, simpered and curtsied to the struggling boy as he was borne along, and held out her snuff-box, in apparent wonder that he would not stop to take a pinch. Mr. Norberry, who was at some distance behind, had not witnessed the accident.

Middleton saw that there was not a moment to be lost. At Cambridge he had acquired one accomplishment—that of swimming—sometimes the only one that students bring from the university, and he instantly threw himself into the water, so as to intercept the boy, which he found no

difficulty in effecting ; but to resist the current and reach the bank with his prize proved by no means of such easy achievement. Debilitated by his late illness, and impeded in the use of his arms by the clinging of the terrified boy, his utmost efforts could not master the stream, which drew him backwards towards the mill, as often as his vehement exertions had enabled him to resist its perilous suction, and to gain a momentary advance. By shaking off and sacrificing the boy he might have saved himself, but he seemed determined to rescue him, or to share with him the desperate chance of being dragged under the wheel.

This catastrophe neither of them could long have escaped, had not Chritty reached the bank in the very crisis of their fate. Clasping her hands together, and uttering an agonised scream of terror as she saw the imminency of the danger, she lost for a moment her self-possession. It was only for a moment. In another instant she rushed into the water till it reached her shoulders, and then, throwing forward one end of her long shawl, while she firmly grasped

as Chritty had secured
succeeded, without mis-
him out of the dead
hand, when all three
together. Unconscious
hand she had clasped,
in the agitation of the
exclaimed, "O my de-
are safe—you are safe
God!"

The tender return of
her to her recollection,
her hand, blushed deep.
accents attempted to ex-
was involuntary, as she
about. But all her fac-
passed away with the de-
them up to sudden vigor.
voice faltered, the colour

been supported by Middleton. Involuntarily pressing her to his bosom, he bade the rescued boy run for assistance ; but the little urchin, stupefied by his terrors, instead of moving from the spot, continued crying and bewailing himself ; while Aunt Patty, who had now come up, curtsied to the whole party by turns, and with her never-failing simper presented her ever-ready snuff-box.

Unable to quit the spot himself, or to derive any succour from his companions, the bewildered Middleton, whose agonised feelings now fully revealed to him the secret of his attachment, could do nothing but ejaculate, “ Brave, generous girl ! my dear preserver ! what courage, what presence of mind ! my dear, my beloved Miss Norberry ! ”

The boy’s outcries proved so far serviceable that they reached the ears of Hargrave and Lucy, who now ran to the spot, the latter, whom it was not easy to outstrip, reaching it first. A few words of explanation apprising them of what had occurred, Hargrave hurried towards the village for assistance, while Lucy

lavished the most affectionate attentions upon her sister, who, though she had been overcome by sudden faintness, had never completely lost her consciousness, and now began to revive. As soon as she opened her eyes and discovered her situation, her face was again deeply suffused with blushes; she withdrew herself from the arms that had been supporting her, and leaned upon Lucy, murmuring with an anxious look, but in a faint voice, "Pray, pray Mr. Middleton, take care of yourself—you are an invalid—this accident may occasion a relapse—pray hasten home instantly. As for me, it is nothing; I was overcome by the surprise and agitation of the moment, but I am strong—very strong—and shall be as well as ever in a few minutes."

Touched by this tender solicitude, Middleton, at all times utterly regardless of himself, expressed the deepest anxiety on account of Chritty, and implored her to hasten to the Lodge, that she might be provided with a change of dress, at the same time tendering his arm to support her. She accepted his

proffered aid, but did not lift up her eyes, and leaned rather upon Lucy than her lover, for such may Middleton be henceforth called ; and thus they returned slowly towards the village, followed by Aunt Patty, who, having taken the hand of the still crying urchin, was endeavouring to console him by offering him a pinch of rappee, when a woman with disordered hair and dress rushed wildly towards them, and, throwing herself upon the boy, shook him violently, and overwhelmed him with menaces and reproaches for having disobeyed her repeated injunctions never to approach the mill-dam. This passionate mood was of short endurance, for in another minute she burst into tears, reproached herself for her violence, clasped the child in her arms, and almost stifled it with kisses and caresses, after which she fell suddenly upon her knees before Middleton. Some distant eye-witness of the fact had apprised her that the Squire had rescued the boy, and the poor woman's impassioned gratitude seemed to know no bounds.
“ The blessings—the blessings of God be upon

you!" she exclaimed, uplifting her clasped hands to Heaven. "O Sir! you have saved my life as well as Harry's: his father doats upon him, he loves him a thousand times better than himself:—he is a very violent man, and has often sworn that he would kill me if I suffered any harm to come to his darling boy. God bless you, sir, again and again!"

"My good friend!" said Middleton, "I have done no more than I should have performed for any other child, and you should thank this lady, not me, for she it is who has preserved us both; but this is no time for parley. Come to me by and by at the Lodge, after you have changed your son's clothes."

"Alas, sir! he is no son of mine—he is only my nephew."

The party again advancing, had not proceeded many yards, when they encountered Hargrave and a posse of the villagers; the former provided with such restoratives as he could hastily collect, while all eagerly proffered their services, and would have placed Chritty in a chair, which they had brought with them

for the purpose of carrying her to the Lodge. As she had been affected more by her terror on account of Middleton's danger than by her exertions or the plunge in the water, she was now sufficiently recovered to decline both the restoratives and the conveyance; and, being superior to all affectation of tremors and weakness, she walked forward with a firm step and a cheerful look, declaring that she felt already invigorated by the cold bath she had so unexpectedly taken, though she still expressed anxiety on account of Middleton. Before they reached the village they met Mr. Norberry, who, concluding from his daughter's plight that she had met with some trifling accident, exclaimed, with a reproachful look, "Eugh! soused into the water I see. Awkward girl! always star-gazing, or staring at the clouds. Wonder, for my part, you don't flounder into every ditch. Spoilt your clothes. Who's to pay for new ones? Ruined man, now: poor as a rat—eugh!"

When apprised, however, that she had voluntarily endangered her own life to save that

of another, the thought of the danger she had incurred, as well as of the generous courage she had displayed, brought a tear to the father's eye; he tenderly embraced her, muttering in a softened tone, "Ask your pardon, my dear child:—brave girl—good girl! wouldn't have lost you for the whole village;" and, putting Lucy aside, he took Chritty's arm, and besought her to hurry on as fast as she could, for fear she should catch cold. Nearly the whole population of Brookshaw had now gathered round them, pouring all sorts of

purpose, and as she was about the same size as Chritty, the latter withdrew with her to Madge's room, and, being presently equipped in a neat peasant's garb, again descended to the parlour, where Middleton was already seated. Her metamorphosed appearance excited no little amusement; her father, now in an unusually gracious mood, declared that he had never seen her look so well as in her present dress, though the girl was certainly not pretty. Hargrave politely assented to the first part of the proposition, but stoutly denied the second; so did Middleton, still more vehemently, protesting that, although Miss Norberry, from her fine figure and fascinating countenance, must always be entitled to admiration, she had never appeared so interesting in his eyes as when she first recovered her senses after her immersion in the water. As Chritty recollects that she had then been supported in his arms, and had heard him passionately term her "his beloved," this declaration called up a thousand blushing apparitions to her face, and filled her with such confusion, that Middleton,

in order to relieve the embarrassment he had occasioned, invited Mr. Norberry and his daughter, as well as Aunt Patty and Hargrave, to convert the occurrence of the morning into an excuse for a pleasant social day, by staying to partake of such an extempore dinner as Madge could provide.

It would be difficult to decide which of his guests was the most delighted by this proposition, which being accepted as cordially as it was given, the master of the mansion forthwith proceeded to hold a council with his cook and

ing dinner, although it could not boast either French wines or made dishes; and, instead of a liveried lackey behind each chair, the whole duty of attendance was discharged by a cleanly, fresh-coloured, Saxon-faced country damsel, being the identical Fanny Penfold, of whom we have already made honourable mention.

Shortly after the conclusion of this simple meal, Middleton received an intimation that the woman whose nephew had been saved was in attendance with the child. When they were ushered into the room, all were astonished at the improved appearance of the boy, who at the time of the accident had been so bedraggled with muddy water, and so disguised with tears and terror, that his singular beauty, both of form and feature, had escaped notice. In his present garb and altered looks he seemed to be a perfect model of youthful symmetry and comeliness, while his manners and language, as he returned thanks to his preservers, evinced a gracefulness and propriety superior to his station. His aunt, renewing her acknowledg-

ments in a strain of the most ardent gratitude, stated, in answer to Middleton's inquiries, that the boy's name was Harry Clements, and that his father was in service in London as a coachman. Upon being interrogated as to the name of the family with whom he lived, and their place of residence, she betrayed some little confusion, and then declared that she was utterly unacquainted with either; but renewed her previous statement that though a passionate and violent man, he was the fondest and best of parents, that he doated upon this his only child,

to those from whom me may justly claim it, because they have enabled us to perform a kind action, which, like every other virtue, rewards itself. I love this charming boy, for instance, because I have been instrumental in saving his life ; and I—" he hesitated, for the word "love" was at the tip of his lips, and though he felt the impropriety of using it, no fitting substitute immediately suggested itself ; " and I naturally esteem, and reverence, and admire Miss Norberry, even more than I did previously, because she has rescued me from a desperate danger. If I have said little upon this subject, it is really because I have been unable to find expression for my feelings."

" I am glad of it," said Chritty ; " and, as you have just declared that every good deed as its own reward, I wish you would leave mine, if it deserves the name, to thank itself."

" Nay," resumed Middleton, " I was not quite disinterested in my logic, for it goes to prove that you ought to stand well affected towards me for having enabled you to render me a signal service."

"Cry your mercy!" exclaimed Chritty, smiling; "this is either fishing for a compliment, or it is mere sophistry, and I have no turn for either; but being a plain spoken body, as the good housewives say, I will freely confess that, without assuming the smallest merit for obeying a mere impulse, I am delighted that I happened to be on the spot, and that I acted as I did. Come, Lucy, we must be going homewards, as I neither wish to hear any more compliments for not being afraid of a cold bath, nor to face the night-air after taking

again meet the Miss Talfords, when the horror of the taxed cart will be aggravated by my wearing this peasant's garb? Forefend us, all fays and fairies, against any such calamity!"

"If they will defend you from catching cold," said the affectionate Lucy, "I will ask no other favour of them."

Middleton, who had disappeared for a moment, now returned with Madge's scarlet cloak, which he wrapped round Chritty, in spite of her protestations that it was unnecessary, and then helped her into the vehicle. Hargrave performed the same office for Lucy; the father and Aunt Patty were already seated, when, after cordial shaking of hands, and mutually expressed hopes that they should all meet again in a day or two, the party drove off on their return to Maple Hatch.

"What a charming, unaffected, and every way superior girl is Miss Norberry!" exclaimed Middleton, on regaining the parlour with his friend. "Though her father was much less morose than usual this morning, I have sometimes seen him treat her so harshly, notwith-

standing her filial attentions, which are truly exemplary, that I have been tempted to regret her absolute dependence upon a parent who can be so unconscious of the prize he possesses."

"What! are you not then aware that he and all the family are dependent upon Miss Norberry, whose income of three or four hundred a year, which is their sole support, was left to her by a maiden aunt? This fact, which she herself keeps a secret, I gathered from Lucy, who was betrayed into divulging

comforts, that she may provide little luxuries for them ; exposed to such incessant annoyance from her harsh and splenetic father, and yet so meek, so humble, so enduring, so magnanimous ! Her income a bare competency, and yet enabled not only to maintain a respectable appearance at home, but to administer charitable assistance to her neighbours ! Imbued, even to her heart's core, with the very spirit of religion, and yet cheerful as the sunrise in May, and free from the smallest taint of bigotry and intolerance ! O thou unparagoned and all-accomplished girl ! happy was the augury, and faithful the prophetic promptings, that led thy parents to bestow upon thee the hallowed name of Christiana !"

While he admitted the merits of the elder sister, Hargrave maintained with all a lover's zeal the claims of the sparkling Lucy, observing that the pupil was every way worthy of her instructress. " There you have pronounced her highest eulogy !" exclaimed his friend, and in this strain the conversation proceeded, until Middleton complained of a shivering sensation

in his limbs, and expressed a fear that he had indeed caught cold, when Hargrave, reminding him of his debilitated state and the danger of a relapse, prevailed upon him to retire immediately to bed.

CHAPTER XI.

Distempered nerves

Infect the thoughts ; the languor of the frame
Depresses the soul's vigour. Quit your couch,
Cleave not so fondly to your moody cell ;
Nor let the hallowed powers, that shed from heaven
Stillness and rest, with disapproving eye
Look down upon your taper through a watch
Of midnight hours.

WORDSWORTH.

NOTWITHSTANDING all Chritty's admiration of Middleton's character, he entertained certain notions, which she considered so inimical to his own happiness, and consequently to the mental peace of those who should be intimately connected with him, that she could not reconcile herself to the thought of receiving him as a suitor. It was, therefore, with a double pain, both on her own account and his, that she reflected on the betrayal of regard into

which she had been inadvertently hurried. Frank and straightforward in all her actions, she determined to conduct herself towards him as if nothing had occurred, but at the same time to hold a strict guard over her feelings in future ; and, above all, to efface if she could, any impression that she might have made, by discountenancing rather than encouraging his attentions.

Hargrave and Lucy, visited by no such misgivings, nourished the passion which had sprung up in their bosoms without restraint or apprehension. The former, though his temperament had become grave and almost saturnine at times, from the disappointment in his affections of which we have given a brief outline, delighted to behold in others the vivacity which he himself had lost ; and, imagining that he should possess in Lucy an ever-flowing fountain of gaiety equally innocent and fascinating, he felt a daily increase of his attachment. Strange as it may sound, Lucy liked her admirer all the better for being of a sedate character and some years older than herself.

The sprightliness in which a giddy girl might indulge even to exuberance, would not, she thought, have assorted either with the sex or the sacred calling of Hargrave; as to his age, the difference between them was not so disproportionate as to amount to an objection; and she only felt the more flattered that a man of mature years should select her from the crowd, and, instead of paying the sugary compliments with which she had sometimes been surfeited by dangling youngsters, should converse with her rationally and even confidentially, as if he sought her society from motives that rendered his preference a real honour. Conscious of her inferiority to her sister in point of intellect, she had been accustomed to believe that all other girls possessed equal advantages over her, and had thus formed a disparaging and unjust opinion of herself. With all her humility, however, she had sufficient pride and self-love to feel flattered by the attentions of Hargrave, and perhaps the more so because she thought so humbly of her own merits.

Chritty proved right in her predictions as to

the consequences of the accident at the mill-dam. Braced into vigorous health by constant exercise in the open air, in almost every state of the atmosphere, she herself experienced no injurious effects from her immersion ; while in Middleton it brought on a relapse, attended with inflammatory symptoms, which at first assumed a very menacing aspect. It was this illness which prevented his going to London, as he had purposed, to attend the marriage of his sister with Sir Dennis Lifford, a mark of affection and respect which he would gladly

Hatch. It is much easier to control the head than the heart; when Chritty's judgment had dictated a resolution, she seldom swerved from it, unless when an appeal was made to the kindlier and more tender sympathies of her nature. All her determinations as to the coldness and reserve with which she should treat Middleton were instantly put to flight on her observing his languid, pale, and altered looks. Alike surprised at the suddenness of the change, and overcome by her feelings, the generous, warm-hearted girl, expressed her sorrow for his sufferings and her anxiety for his recovery, with an ardent tenderness, so gratifying to its object that it seemed, to judge by his delighted countenance, as if she possessed the power of instantly realizing her benevolent aspirations.

Partly with the interested motive of having more frequent interviews with Lucy, and partly in the hope of contributing to the recovery of his friend, by affording him as often as possible the cheering solace of Chritty's society, Hargrave conveyed the family from Maple Hatch

two or three times a week, thus affording ample opportunities to the lovers of cementing their passion by the frequent sight of their mistresses. It appeared to Chritty that, by absenting herself upon these occasions, without assigning any valid excuse, she should betray a consciousness of the passion she had inspired, and perhaps be suspected of coquetting. An air of self-possession and indifference, coupled with a guarded discountenance of any very pointed attentions that might be shown her, seemed the best mode of repressing a predilection which, with all her regard and esteem for Middleton, she could not fully reciprocate. But her coldness could not chill so rapidly, as her presence, her virtues, and her accomplishments kindled and increased the passion she had excited. Her lover's flame gathered strength and extended itself, until it resembled a conflagration, which is rather fed than checked by the puny streams of cold water thrown upon it. Middleton noticed indeed an occasional distance in her manner, but as he could not doubt the testimonies of regard that had escaped from

her at the time of the accident, and attributed her present altered demeanour to a maidenly coyness and timidity, it only enhanced the admiration it was intended to repress.

In a few days he was sufficiently recovered to quit the house, and stroll as far as the plantation, or even to the first field of what he termed his picture-gallery, where the balsamic air, and the beauties of the scenery, in which he had ever found a particular delight, invigorated his body and produced a soothing effect upon his mind. Ever since his return to Brookshaw, he had been blessed with a complacent, we had almost said a happy, mood. The frightful and mysterious occurrence which had hastened his departure from London, still haunted him at intervals, like an occasional nightmare; but his constant association with such redeeming specimens of human nature as Hargrave and the two sisters of Maple Hatch had banished from his thoughts those disparaging notions of his fellow-creatures, which had so often darkened his mind till it sunk into a despondency approaching to despair.

Sitting one morning in an alcove of the plantation, indulging a grateful sense of the long respite he had enjoyed from these tormenting thoughts, he drew forth the miniature which was ever worn next his heart, pressed it respectfully to his lips and to his bosom, and continued gazing so intently upon it, while he ejaculated a few words of impassioned homage, that he did not immediately notice the entrance of a second person. It was Chritty, who, in wandering with her father through the grounds, had left him at a little distance behind. No sooner did Middleton recognise her than he huddled the miniature into his bosom in evident confusion, and was about to speak, when he was anticipated by his visitant, who said formally, and with a slight reddening of the face, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Middleton, for this intrusion. My father, fatigued with walking, desired me to step forward to see whether you were in the alcove; but had I been aware—" She paused, for she scarcely knew how to proceed, when Middleton took advantage of her embarrassment to exclaim, "My

dear Miss Norberry, your presence can never be an intrusion, nor can you have observed anything with which I would not wish you to be made fully acquainted, if you desire it. Will you allow me to explain that—”

“ O dear ! by no means,” interposed Chritty, “ I desire nothing—I have no right, no wish, not the least in the world—to look for an explanation. You are in your own domain, giving vent to the effusions of your own heart. It was only for me to explain how I came to intrude, most unintentionally I can assure you, upon your privacy.”

“ Suffer me to repeat that I have no seclusion which will not ever be most welcomely, most delightfully, dispelled by your appearance; and as to the feelings and effusions of my heart—O Miss Norberry ! if you will allow me to lay bare that heart before you—if you will listen for a moment to an effusion that shall breathe its most cherished hopes and aspirations—if you will forgive the presumption—”

“ Nay, sir, you had an object for your effusions before my presence interrupted them.

It does not become me to hear, and still less to share them, but there is nothing to forgive on either side—here comes my father."

"Eugh!" growled Mr. Norberry, as he reached the alcove, "found you at last, have we? This comes of having grounds; playing at hide and seek with one another all day long,—tired as a dog. Why did you run away from me, Chritty? Ar'n't a penny-postman, to trudge all day afoot; but nobody cares for *me*."

"You forget, sir, that you desired me to step forward and see whether Mr. Middleton were in the alcove."

"Didn't desire you to stay chatting with him, though! Come, let's get back to the house: hate walking through fields and woods—only meant for cattle. Ar'n't a horse, or an ass—eugh!"

Taking his daughter's arm, Mr. Norberry returned towards the Lodge, Middleton walking beside them, and endeavouring by the most courteous attentions to dispel the reserve that still chilled the countenance of his fair companion. If no man is a hero to his *valet de*

chambre, still less can any female be a perfect heroine to the author who is conversant with her most secret thoughts. Candour obliges us to confess that, upon this occasion, Chritty Norberry did not display so perfect a magnanimity as we could have wished. Having made up her mind to reject Middleton as a husband, she ought not to have felt hurt that any other woman should possess his affections, even supposing the miniature he had pressed so tenderly to his heart and to his lips to have been that of a beloved mistress ; a presumption only justified by appearances, since she had not sought to obtain any glimpse of the painting. In the first moment of calm reflection that succeeded to this surprise of her feelings, she accused herself of having harbour'd an unworthy sentiment, and sought her vindication by a species of sophistry in which we are all subtle, when we are special pleaders for ourselves. "Jealousy!" she mentally ejaculated, "there *can* be none where there is no love, and I cannot be said to love a man whose sentiments I do not altogether approve, and

whose hand, were it instantly proffered to me, I should feel it my duty to reject. No—it is the duplicity that would delude me by the tokens of a preference and regard which he evidently lavishes upon another; it is his double-dealing which has offended me. From the generous, the kind-hearted Middleton, whom I deemed the very soul of truth and honour, I could never have expected deceit, and it is natural that I should resent an unworthiness which I had so little reason to anticipate." Alas! had Middleton been indifferent to her,

it might occasion, induced him to form a resolution diametrically the reverse, and to decide that Chritty *should* return to the Lodge in the quality of its mistress. As his passion had been receiving a daily accession of strength, and he had previously made up his mind to offer his hand, he saw in the awkward affair of the miniature a reason for hastening his declaration, as the most effectual method of dispelling erroneous impressions. He had been on the point of removing all doubt upon the subject by satisfactory explanations, when the inopportune appearance of Mr. Norberry prevented him. Nothing now remained but to seize an opportunity of formally doing so, and, as he could not bear to remain longer than was absolutely necessary under an unmerited suspicion, he resolved to put his purpose in execution on the following day.

Diffident, sensitive, timid, and penetrated with an intimate conviction that the happiness or misery of his life would depend on the result of his offer, Middleton, after taking long and anxious counsel of his thoughts, resolved

to make his proposal in writing, instead of seeking a personal interview. It was much easier, however, to decide upon writing, than to please himself in the composition of his letter. Five or six were destroyed before he was sufficiently satisfied to sign, seal, and deliver, his amended epistle into the hands of Robin, with strict orders for its instant and careful conveyance to Maple Hatch. Of its contents, precious as every sentence might perchance be deemed by some of our fair readers, we can only furnish a brief outline. After pledging himself to a full and satisfactory explanation on the subject of the miniature, the writer solemnly protested that his whole undivided heart and affections were irreversibly devoted to Miss Norberry, whose virtues and talents formed the subject of an ardent but not intemperate eulogy. He then entered into a frank detail of his circumstances, made a formal offer of his hand, stated that her acceptance of it, should he be deemed worthy of an honour and happiness so inappreciable, would scarcely separate her from her own

family, since it was his determination to reside permanently at the Lodge; and concluded with a passionate entreaty that she would not plunge him into despair by the rejection of his suit.

Of the intense anxiety with which he awaited the return of his messenger they only can judge who have been placed in a similar state of suspense. It was little likely that an answer requiring such mature deliberation on her own part, and a probable appeal to the sanction of her father, would be immediately despatched; but it was just possible that Robin might be kept waiting till a reply could be framed, and this idea, improbable as it was, fixed him immovably at the window commanding the road by which his servant would return. While thus straining his eyes, and converting every animate and not a few inanimate objects into a likeness of the desiderated harbinger of pleasant tidings, he saw advancing towards the house, from the side entrance of the garden, a group, consisting of the boy whose life he had been instrumental in saving, his aunt, and a third person, whom, from his coachman's

appearance, he concluded to be the father of the child. He was a short, florid, and rather corpulent man, attired in a very handsome livery ; his shining flaxen side-curls trimly arranged under his large cocked hat ; his countenance open and smiling ; and his whole substantial comfortable appearance conveying the impression that he served a family where there was plenty of good cheer and no very severe duties to perform. On the door being opened by Madge, for Middleton had given general orders that all visitants, however humble their station, should be ushered into the parlour, the woman entered first, holding the child by the hand, and, after dropping a deep curtsey, turned to the man behind, and said, "Come forward, Henry, and fall upon your knees, and call for the blessing of God on the gentleman who saved your dear boy's life."

The man advanced accordingly, smoothing down his shining hair with his right hand, but he had no sooner caught sight of Middleton than, suddenly starting back with every demonstration of utter amazement and dismay, while his

staring eyes remained riveted upon the object before him, he ejaculated in a hoarse whisper, “ You ! you ! is it you who saved my boy’s life at the risk of your own ? O God ! this is too much ! Villain—villain that I am ! ” He smote his hand violently upon his reddened forehead, which was suddenly covered with perspiration, and then looking wildly around him, and gasping for breath, exclaimed pantingly, “ Air ! air ! I shall be suffocated ! ” and rushed out of the room like a maniac.

“ What is the meaning of this ? ” asked Middleton, not a little astonished at the unaccountable burst of passion he had just witnessed. “ Is your brother subject to fits of madness ? ”

“ No, sir, no,” replied the woman, dropping a tear from her eye as she shook her head, “ he is both sane and sober, but he is a strange violent man, as I told you before, though why he should break out into such an agony before the preserver of his child Heaven above only knows. I hope you will forgive him, sir, and allow me to follow, and see what is the matter

with him. Nothing could exceed his gratitude as we came along ; he declared himself ready to lay down his life for you ; and I am the more surprised at his conduct, because the sight of his dear boy generally quiets him, let his rage be ever so towering. Come along, Harry, let us go and look after your poor father."

" Do so," said Middleton, " and let me see you again to-day, and your brother too, if possible, for I shall be anxious to know the cause of his strange behaviour."

too robust to be affected by trifles indicated a most powerful cause of excitement. Middleton's curiosity was piqued to learn its development, although, as he sate at his parlour-window watching for the return of the woman, he did not forget to peer along the road by which Robin was expected with tidings from Maple Hatch.

While thus occupied a letter was brought in by Madge, which had just been left at the gate. Her master gazed at the superscription; he knew not the writing; it bore the post-mark of a country-town at some distance, in which he had not a single acquaintance. He opened it with a vague feeling of indifference, but it soon became evident, from the flashing of his eyes and the sudden reddening of his cheeks as he perused it, that the contents were of a startling and painful nature. They were as follow:—

" SIR,

" This letter comes from a friend who knows and regards you, though he has reasons for

concealing his name. Its object is to caution you against Miss Norberry, who is not what she appears, but an artful, designing girl, who seeks to inveigle your affections for purposes which I shall feel it my duty to divulge, should you not immediately withdraw your misplaced attachment. Once already have you been deceived by a girl who appeared not less innocent and fair than Miss Norberry. Beware of being a second time betrayed !

“ YOUR FRIEND.”

“ Slanderer and liar !” cried Middleton, crumpling up the paper, hurling it to the ground, and stamping on it indignantly with his foot. “ Miss Norberry artful and designing ! Miss Norberry an inveigler of affections for unworthy purposes ! Loathsome, calumnious villain ! she is a paragon of purity and perfection — a pattern of every virtue—a model for her whole sex. O Heaven ! can there exist a miscreant so devilish as to traduce the transcendent excellence and immaculate integrity of Miss Norberry ?—Fool that I am ! why should I

thus chafe at the malignity of an anonymous slanderer, who deserves nothing but silent and supreme contempt? My friend, indeed! insolent, false, detestable wretch! Yet must he know something of me, since he makes allusion to that hateful affair which I have ever wished to lock up as a secret in my own bosom. This is strange!"

He picked up the paper, unfolded, and again read it over, word by word; but could not recognise the hand-writing, which bore no semblance of being feigned. "That I, myself, have enemies," continued Middleton, as he gazed upon the revolting scroll, "enemies who would destroy me, though I am unconscious of offence towards a single human being, was unfortunately known to me already; but that Miss Norberry should have foes so implacable as to seek the destruction of her fair fame, which I believe to be still dearer to her than her life, is a thought almost too horrible to contemplate. And this infamous traducer says that he knows me; nay, he does, he must know me, or he could never have alluded to

—. Evil betide him ! for dragging back that hideous affair to my recollection. What are we to think of human nature when such gratuitous wickedness can exist ; what can reconcile us to a world, wherein we must mix with fellow-creatures like these ?" — Immersed in such reflections, and gazing upon the paper before him, instead of watching the road by which Robin was to return, he allowed that trusty emissary to reach the Lodge, and even to present himself in the parlour, before he was aware of his approach. " Well, Robin !" cried his master, starting from his seat with an animated yet anxious look, " have you brought any answer — where is it ? Did you see Miss Norberry — did she say anything — how did she appear ?"

" Dear heart !" cried Robin, " what a power of questions ! Why, no man could answer them all at once, unless he was ambidexter, and had got two tongues in his head. I can't tell how Miss Norberry looked, 'cause I didn't see her ; and I ha'n't brought an answer 'cause she didn't write one ; but she sent Miss Lucy

enquire particularly after your health, and give her compliments and to say, that she could write an answer to-morrow."

"To-morrow! Not before? Well, I had right to expect it sooner."

Relieved from his immediate suspense upon his subject, Middleton's thoughts reverted to the singular behaviour of the man who had visited him, and to the contents of the infamous letter which he still held in his hand. As the woman whom he had desired to return did not appear, he determined to communicate to Largrave all that had occurred, to show him the libellous attack upon Miss Norberry, and to ask his advice as to the best means of discovering and punishing the writer. His friend, not less indignant than himself at so flagitious an aspersion, suspected that the two facts with which he had been made acquainted might possibly be connected, that Middleton's visitant having been employed to write the letter without knowing the parties, might have been struck with sudden remorse on finding he had been aiming a stab at the peace of his bene-

factor, and he recommended accordingly that they should proceed instantly to interrogate him. On reaching the residence of his sister, she declared that her brother, without explaining the cause of his being so violently affected, had quitted Brookshaw immediately after leaving the Lodge, stating that he meant to strike across the country in order to catch the London stage. Of his address in the metropolis, or the names of his employers, she repeated her entire ignorance, betraying much confusion at these interrogatories and a great indisposition to answer them. Nothing further could be done at present, and, with regard to ulterior proceedings, Hargrave recommended that no notice whatever should be taken of the letter, and that it should be left to the oblivion and contempt it merited.

On the following morning Middleton's suspense became most acute and painful; his breakfast was sent away untouched, to the great discomfort of Robin and Madge; and he continued walking up and down his parlour, or eagerly looking out for the expected messenger

during two or three hours. It was still early when, the desiderated letter being placed in his hands, he tore it eagerly open, and, with a beating heart, read as follows:—

“ DEAR MR. MIDDLETON,

“ From the first moment of our acquaintance I have ever cherished the highest admiration of your talents—the sincerest reverence for your many virtues; and as these feelings have been constantly acquiring strength with the increase of our intimacy, it is difficult to express my pride and satisfaction at finding that I have won your regard, that I have been even deemed worthy the exalted honour of receiving a tender of your hand.

“ But, alas! the pride, the pleasure, the delight, with which I might otherwise have been filled, are converted into painful regret at the thought that circumstances and considerations of the most cogent nature imperatively compel me to decline your offer. As my reservation upon this subject, delicate as it is, would be equally unjust to you and unworthy of my-

self, I will state my reasons with the utmost frankness.

"While my family remain in their present situation, it is not my intention to marry. What would become of my dear father, whose infirmities require such constant solace and attention, were I to desert him in his old age? Who would watch and nurse my poor Aunt Patty? Lucy, dear girl! good and affectionate as she is beautiful, would supply my place to the best of her ability; but she is too young to have so grave a duty exclusively

of his creatures, I believe to be mistakes equally derogatory to the Deity and to man. That they have been occasionally destructive of your own peace of mind I know from painful observation ; that they will continue to be so I have but too much reason to fear. You are well aware that I attach not the smallest importance to merely theoretical differences in religion, where there is sincerity and virtue on both sides ; but my happiness is too important, too sacred, a deposit to be endangered by a marriage where there is an incompatibility so marked and essential as that to which I have adverted.

" You say that my refusal will reduce you to despair. With the high hopes and glorious privileges of a Christian, no man, and least of all so virtuous a one as yourself, should ever abandon himself to despondency. Surely you have too much manliness and good sense to suffer your peace of mind to be even temporarily invaded, because you cannot place it in permanent peril by an incongruous union.

" Insurmountable as are the objections to any closer alliance between us, I shall be proud

to retain the friendship from which I have derived so much pleasure and instruction. Whether you concede this privilege or not, I entreat you to confide in the perfect truth with which, on my part, I subscribe myself,

“ Dear Mr. Middleton,

“ Your sincere, your grateful friend,

“ CHRISTIANA NORBERRY.”

“ Maple Hatch,

“ Thursday Night.”

“ Then there is no hope for me!” exclaimed Middleton, throwing himself back in

ing canker that tainted the first object of my affections ; thus only can I explain the base and slanderous attack levelled against the immaculate Miss Norberry. What have I done to entail this persecution, this wretchedness upon myself and others ? to be as a second Jonah, carrying with me storm and danger whithersoever I go ? But why should I be exempted from the common lot of man ? Guilt and sorrow in this world, perdition and torment in the next, such is his dark doom. O miserable race of mortals ! O world of bitterness and woe ! O revolting present ! O still more frightful future ! ”

In this strain did he continue for some time to ejaculate and to bewail himself. The hope that had latterly given sweetness to his life, was suddenly changed to gloominess and gall ; a dark and disfiguring cloud seemed to have spread itself, like a pall over the whole face of creation ; he retired to his room, and, refusing for several days to admit the even visits of Hargrave, abandoned himself to the blackest melancholy.

CHAPTER XIII.

Put not yourself into amazement how these things should be: all difficulties are but easy when they are known.

Measure for Measure

PANTING for breath, trembling with agitation, and rendered still more pale from the transport of rage into which he had thrown himself, the gaunt cadaverous-looking stranger, whose sudden outrage upon Sir Dennis Lillard, in the very body of the church, had struck aghast the whole nuptial assemblage, advanced towards them, after having committed the bridegroom to the custody of the Bow Street officers, and, with a courteous demeanour, singularly at variance with the violence he had just been perpetrating, began to apologise for the alarm and disturbance he had inevitably occasioned. "What the devil!—hey!—hick!—

apology!" interposed Sir Matthew, almost crimson with wrath, " knock me down, and ask pardon—pull my nose, and make me a bow—humbug! Fine words butter no parsnips. Tell 'ee what, sirrah! if 'ee baint mad and just broke out o' Bedlam, I shall trouble 'ee for that horse-whip, and when we get out o' church, if I dont give 'ee a proper taste on't, my name's not Matt. Middleton."

Suiting the action to the word, he seized the right hand of the stranger, and was about to wrench the whip from his grasp, when Lord Arthur Fintown exclaimed, " Nay, Sir Matthew, you are an alderman and a man of peace, and had better leave the settlement of this affair to me. If this person is a gentleman, as his appearance really betokens, he will either give such an explanation of his conduct as may justify it, though that seems hardly possible, or he will do me the honour of affording me satisfaction in the usual way for the gross insult offered to our whole party."

" Most willingly do I accept the alternative," said the stranger, politely bowing, " but surely

this is no place for an *éclaircissement*, nor need the public be parties to it."

He glanced at the crowd that was pouring into the church, making all sorts of absurd enquiries; and as Sir Matthew and Lord Arthur immediately saw the force of this objection, they proposed an adjournment to the vestry-room, the former ejaculating, "Ay, we must look to dear Ciss: poor girl! frightened out of her wits, I dare say. Enough to make her: great scarecrow of a fellow; looks like the ghost of Magog: hey!—what!—come along."

On their reaching the vestry, the inquisitive strangers who had intruded were ejected, the door was fastened: Cecilia, sitting beside an open window, and smelling to salts, had recovered from her faintness, though she was still much agitated, and the rest of the marriage-party were gathered together in the narrow apartment, every eye bent eagerly upon the stranger, and every countenance expressing either surprise and curiosity, or indignation and alarm. "Ladies and gentlemen!" said the unknown, who had by this time recovered

his breath and some portion of his self-possession, while his wild and haggard looks were now tempered by much suavity of manner, "I ought to begin by apologising for the confusion and terror of which I have been the occasion, but really I feel so delighted, so overjoyed at the thought of my having reached the church in time to prevent the completion of this fellow's infamous design, that I can only congratulate you, as I do from the very bottom of my heart, on your escape from a calamity which would have plunged you all into the deepest distress. You, sir, I presume, are Sir Matthew Middleton. I give you joy that your daughter has been snatched from a treacherous and cruel snare, and I flatter myself that when you know who and what I am, you will be spared the trouble of attempting to apply my horsewhip in the way you meditated." A slight tinge of his pallid cheek and an air of dignified pride accompanied these words.

"Fegs! I don't know that," cried the baronet, "that's hereafter as may be—like to pay as I go—shan't let you slip in a hurry—

don't throw away clean water till I get dirty—
fair speak and nose tweak won't do for me—
tell'ee that plump—hey!—what!—hick!"

"Come, sir," said Lord Arthur, with the air of a man who would not be denied, "we require neither preamble nor congratulation, but insist upon knowing, before we proceed to further measures, who and what you are."

"You shall be satisfied," was the reply; "I am Sir Dennis Lifford, Baronet, of Castle Moils, in the County of Galway."

"You Sir Dennis Lifford!" exclaimed every

not, in the passion of the moment, refrain from chastising with my own hand, though I ought to have left so vile a culprit to the vengeance of the law, was lately my valet!"

A scream of horror from several of the ladies thrilled through the narrow apartment; the word "Impossible!" was ejaculated by others, with an indignant shake of the head; while poor Cecilia, leaning upon her mother for support, and bursting into tears, seemed utterly overcome by her feelings.

"Let me explain," resumed the real Sir Dennis, "the unfortunate combination of circumstances that enabled this fellow to personate me for such a length of time without contradiction or discovery, and your doubts—for some of you, I perceive, are not yet satisfied as to my identity—will be immediately dispelled. His nefarious project was not so wild and desperate as it might seem, for as his name is really Dennis Lifford, no uncommon one in the County of Galway, his marriage, had it been completed, might have been held valid, and he would, at all events, have possessed the

means of obtaining his wife's portion, which was doubtless the rascal's object, or of extorting money for consenting to a divorce or separation. In point of fact, he is the son of an obscure pork-butcher at Tuam."

Lady Middleton, blushing with mingled anger and confusion, and unable to lift up her eyes from the ground, reiterated the hideous word with a shudder of ineffable disgust; Cecilia groaned audibly; the elder Miss Gauntley covertly withdrew her bouquet of orange-flower blossoms, but not so adroitly as to be unobserved by her sister, who immediately followed her example; Mrs. Burroughs slipped out of the room unobserved, and hurried home to consult Dominick; the rest of the females, most of them smelling to their vinaigrettes, gazed at one another with a very sheepish and lackadaisical expression of nausea; while Sir Matthew exclaimed, "Curse the fellow's impudence! was it the son, then, of an obscure pork-butcher who always affected such a contempt for the rabble, and the mob, and all vulgarians of the lower orders, and gave himself the airs of a

dandy, and an exquisite, and a man of birth? —Ay, ay, set a beggar on horseback ride to the devil. Why, Meg, you always said he had the manners of a complete man of fashion—no judge myself—thought him always a fool and a fop—not the less fashionable for that; had 'em there.—If this all true, we shall look like a precious set of asses! But don't understand yet. How could the fellow make such an appearance, and carry off his imposture so cunningly? Strange affair—hey!—what!—hick!"

"I believe I can render it more intelligible to you," resumed the genuine Sir Dennis. "Having received a decent education at Tuam, and being immeasurably vain of his supposed talents and good looks, he determined on seeking his fortune in Dublin, where, however, he would have starved, but that a distant relative took compassion on him, received him into his shop, and taught him his own business of a hair-dresser, which he practised for several years."

Lady Middleton, biting her lip till the blood was ready to start, but without raising her abashed eyes, echoed the hateful word, "Hair-

dresser!" Cecilia gave a second groan; Miss Curzon Chilvers plucked off her white favour with a most distasteful look, and threw it scornfully upon the ground; the other bridesmaids did the same; Lady Selina Silverthorpe, decamping without beat of drum, slipped out of the room and into her carriage, anxious to obtain some compensation for her offended feelings by being the first to spread the strange tidings through the town; while Sir Matthew cried, "Damn the fellow! I might have suspected as much. That was the reason, then,

tainly had the manners and language of a gentleman. How is this to be accounted for?"

" If he really possessed those qualifications," continued Sir Dennis, " he must have gained them on the stage, to which he subsequently betook himself, when his debts and dissipated habits compelled him to give up his shop and run away from Dublin. Joining a paltry strolling company, he sometimes made himself useful as hair-dresser, and sometimes was promoted to act the parts of fops and coxcombs, in which capacity he must have picked up whatever knowledge he may display of fashionable manners and phraseology."

" But where," asked Sir Matthew, " where did he pick up his letters of introduction, and his title-deeds, and his money, and his equipage? Zooks! we are not a bit nearer the real state of the case than we were at first; all in the dark still—hey!—what!—hick!"

" Because you have not heard me out. Strolling with his company to Galway, he was arrested for debt, when his mother, who had formerly been a servant in my family, after

telling me his whole history, prevailed upon me to liberate him, and implored me to take him abroad with me, pledging herself for his future good conduct, and assuring me that he bitterly lamented his past irregularities. Pleased with the fellow's appearance and address, as well as with his seeming aptitude for my employment, I yielded, in an evil hour, to the importunities of his mother, a very worthy woman, whom I was anxious to oblige, and consented to take him as my valet, and to carry him with me to Paris, whither I was

an involuntary mistake :—we have a few
on Thursday night, if you will do us
honour.” Here her ladyship slipped a
into his hand. “ Allow me to present
Gauntley. This is my second daughter,
Gusta ; my dear,—Sir Dennis Lifford—the
Sir Dennis.” The young giantesses, re-
ing themselves to the height of six feet by
tseying, “ grinned horribly a ghastly smile,”
ring at the expected successor to the earl-
om of Ballycoreen as if they could have swal-
wed him up with their saucer-eyes ; while the
bject of their grim smirking courteously re-
retted his inability to accept her ladyship’s
ivitation, as he was under the necessity of
eparting almost immediately for Paris.

“ What the dickins has all this flummery
ot to do with the explanation,” demanded Sir
Sir Matthew impatiently. “ You engaged the
ellow as your valet, what then ? ”

“ Taking with me the title-deeds of my
state, in order that I might consult an emi-
ent barrister in Dublin, as to the possibility of
utting off a portion of the entail, I started for

that city in the identical travelling carriage which I saw waiting at the door of this church as I entered. On the journey I was seized with a sudden and violent illness, which compelled me to stop at an obscure town in the county of Westmeath, where my malady became so much aggravated by an ignorant practitioner that a brain fever ensued, and I was for some time delirious. Here was an opportunity too tempting to be resisted by my rogue of a valet, who, in all probability, thought I should die. Leaving with the people of the inn a sufficient sum of money to satisfy them as to my immediate expenses, and stating that he must proceed to Dublin to inform my family of my illness and procure fresh supplies, he left me to my fate, and set off in my travelling carriage, carrying with him my title-deeds, my watch, and other valuable trinkets, a letter of introduction to a gentleman in London, and two or three hundred pounds in Bank notes. With this sum, as I have since discovered, he proceeded to a gaming-house in Dublin, and having been fortunate enough to treble its amount, he seems

to have conceived the design of assuming my name, and, under that disguise, of making some daring and brilliant hit in London, which should render him independent for life. Of the enterprise upon which he decided, and hazardous as it was, had so nearly accomplished, I need not inform the present company ; though I hope they will now accept, in the sincere and candid spirit with which they are proffered, my congratulations on their deliverance from a calamity which would have been not less painful than degrading to all parties."

" Curse the fellow once more !" cried Sir Matthew ; " I can now understand why he was always in such a confounded hurry, and would not have the wedding postponed for a single day. Fudge !—humbug !—swindling rascal ! But 'ee hav'n't told us how 'ee found him out, and followed him up, so as to be here in the nick o' time. Narrow escape, egad ! Never mind—a mile's as good as a miss—hey !—what !—hick !"

" When I recovered my faculties," continued Sir Dennis, " I had the mortification of finding

myself a prisoner for debt to my landlord, without the means either of proving who and what I was, or of defraying the bill which had been run up against me during my confinement. A fresh delay was incurred by the necessity of sending a messenger to Castle Moila, and it was only on the very day of his return, that a paragraph in a London paper announced to me the impending and early marriage of Sir Dennis Lifford with the only daughter of Sir Matthew Middleton."

"How fortunate!" cried Lady Middleton, who, in the humiliating sense of her precipitation and ambitious folly, eagerly claimed merit for the accident which had prevented the full entailment of their evil consequence, "how fortunate that I caused those paragraphs to be inserted!"

"Ay, Meg; your pride and vanity did 'ee some good there: no thanks to you, though; shot at a pigeon and hit a crow; out o' the frying-pan into the fire; hey!—what! Well, sir?"

"Finding that there was now not a moment

to be lost," resumed Sir Dennis, "I started instantly; travelled night and day, though my impaired health was little adapted to such an exertion, and paused not till I reached London a few hours ago, when I consulted an attorney, procured the assistance of Bow Street officers, and burst upon your bridal party with a sudden, perhaps a rude, violence, for which the state of my feelings, and the circumstances of the case, must plead my excuse. If any doubt still exists as to my identity, I would refer you to my attorney, who is in waiting without; or to my late valet, who is by this time in prison, and will not, I presume, deny himself, now that he is detected and foiled, to be a base, infamous, and ungrateful, impostor."

"Tell 'ee what," said Sir Matthew, "asked 'ee just now for the loan of that horsewhip, intending to use it pretty briskly if 'ee hadn't made out a case; and now I give 'ee free leave to lay it across my shoulders for being such a gull, gudgeon, buzzard, and dupe, as to be bamboozled by an acting, hair-dressing lackey, because he had fine whiskers, fine clothes, and

fine words. Ah ! now we can find out that fine birds don't always make fine feathers. None so blind as them that can't see—had 'ee there, Meg—hey !—what !”

“ Miss Middleton,” said Sir Dennis, taking the hand of Cecilia, whose tears continued falling into her lap beneath her lowered veil; “ allow me to renew my congratulations on your escape from this atrocious design upon your happiness. Believe me that you have, on every account, reason for felicitation, since, even if you had honoured the real instead of the fictitious Sir Dennis Lifford with your regards, you would have entailed upon yourself a sickly and not very sightly companion, whose age and whose infirmities little qualify him for such a distinction.”

Cecilia made no reply to this polite speech; but the elder and the junior Miss Curzon Chilvers, standing on tiptoe, in order to come within eyeshot of the speaker, threw as many dimples as possible into their dumpling faces, as if to intimate that there were others who might not think upon this subject in the same

way as Cecilia : while Lady Middleton, conceiving the pleasant possibility of a transfer from the false to the genuine Simon Pure, arrayed her face in its most winning smiles, and expressed a hope, that although their first introduction had been so painful and inauspicious, they might still be honoured by the acquaintance and friendship of a gentleman to whom they owed so deep and impayable a debt of gratitude. Sir Dennis again lamented that his early departure for the Continent, where he meant to reside for several years for the benefit of his health, would prevent his availing himself of this polite offer ; and then presenting his own card, as well as that of his attorney, to Sir Matthew and Lord Arthur, he bowed courteously, quitted the vestry-room, and drove to his hotel in the reclaimed travelling chariot which was to have conveyed the bride and bridegroom to Dover.

Lady Gauntley, finding that there was no more intelligence to be gleaned, and no chance of making Sir Dennis supply a bridal garland for either of her maypole daughters, gave them

a signal and retired, without saying a syllable to the rest of the party. Mrs. Curzon Chilvers would have done the same, but that Lord Arthur was deeply engaged in a whispering conversation with one of her girls, a proceeding which Lady Middleton interrupted by asking, “Pray, Lord Arthur, who introduced you to this infamous impostor? I saw him first in your society, which to me was a sufficient guarantee of his respectability.”

“Egad! Lady Middleton, you do both me and my friends too much honour. I cannot always answer for my own respectability, still less for theirs. Mrs. Burroughs first made me acquainted with the fellow, stating that he was a distant relative of her own.”

“And by the same lady was he introduced to me also,” cried Mrs. O’Gorman French.

“And to Mrs. Burroughs am I also indebted for that honour,” exclaimed Lady Middleton, delighted to have found a scapegoat upon whom she might throw some portion of the ridicule and blame with which she herself expected to be overwhelmed. “And pray,”

continued her Ladyship, peering with a sharp and vengeful eye round the room, “ where is Mrs. Burroughs ? ”

“ She has *levanted*, stolen a march upon us ; ” said Lord Arthur, “ I saw her sneak off with a crest-fallen look as soon as Sir Dennis commenced his explanation.”

“ This has an exceedingly suspicious appearance ! ” exclaimed Lady Middleton.

“ Come, come, Meg,” cried Sir Matthew, “ don’t ‘ee be too hard upon your friend—fair play’s a jewel—remember she introduced us to that honest trustworthy Frenchman, Mounseer Dupin—had ‘ee there—hey ! —what ! —hick ! ”

Mrs. Curzon Chilvers and her daughters now took their departure, accompanied by Lord Arthur Fintown, whose attentions to the elder of the young ladies seemed completely to console her for the morning’s disappointment ; but Lady Middleton still lingered in the room, anxious that the loungers and gazers who had collected round the church should disperse, before herself and her daughter underwent the

ordeal of their eyes and their observations. The stout and bluff Sir Matthew, however, who had no notion of truckling to a mob, exclaimed, "Well, what are we waiting for? sha'n't get a husband to-day—ar'n't as thick as blackberries. Never mind, Ciss dear! Better single than married to a valet de sham. Living lion better than a dead dog. Give us your arm, dear: come along—hey!—hick!"

Lady Middleton, finding the side-door now quite public enough for her purposes, retired through its narrow portal; Cecilia, who had not spoken a word since the *denouement*, leaned upon her father's arm, and concealing herself as well as she could by means of her veil and her bonnet, passed with a feeling of deep humiliation through such gazers as still hung around the spot, sprang into the carriage, drew up the opposite blind, huddled herself into a corner, and burst into a fresh flood of tears. As the vehicle drove rapidly off Sir Matthew used the most affectionate endeavours to console her, urging that she ought to rejoice and give thanks to Heaven for her escape, instead of

abandoning herself to useless lamentation. Lady Middleton, too much in need of consolation to be able to administer it, silently revolved sad and bitter thoughts in her mind, conscious of the unmitigated ridicule, and still more insulting commiseration that awaited her, and yet utterly unable to devise any scheme for warding them off. Her previous boasts, not very sparingly promulgated, that the caption of so valuable a prize as Sir Dennis was entirely attributable to her own contrivance and superior good management, now rushed upon her memory, with the sickening conviction that others would recollect them still more accurately than herself. One only consolation suggested itself to her. She would endeavour to make the meddling Mrs. Burroughs responsible for the whole disgrace; or at all events, compel her to share the ignominy of which she had been the occasion—a charitable resolve which, however, brought but little relief to the misery of her mind. She still felt herself in the situation of an awkward fowler, who, having missed the object at which he aimed, is wounded by the

recoil of his own ill-directed gun, and, instead of obtaining pity, excites contemptuous laughter by his bungling failure.

Such was the plight in which the bridal party returned to Portland Place, where Cecilia immediately hurried to her own apartment, anxious to withdraw herself from every eye, and feeling as if she should never again be able to venture into society and face the sneers and laughter of a taunting world. For Lady Middleton, who fidgeted from one room to another as if she could escape from herself and from the nervous excitement that tormented her, new vexations were reserved whithersoever her footsteps led her. In the dining-room was set out in decorated array the *déjeuner à la fourchette*, prepared for the bridal party. On a side-table in the drawing-room were displayed the little packages of bride-cake, with a special portion for Mrs. Howard Maltby, which the fair brides-maids had so lately enveloped under her own immediate direction. In another chamber were the trinkets and trifles collected for the lottery. On all sides the evidences of her

anticipated triumph were now converted into so many aggravations of her humiliating discomfiture and defeat. Measuring others by her own little mind, she believed that the whole world of her acquaintance would exult in her misfortune; while she did not give them credit for the politeness she herself possessed, and which would have prompted her, had the circumstances been reversed, to gloss over any such feelings of petty malevolence with smiles and courteous grimace. How she might best meet this swelling tide of annoyance, and notify to these hostile friends the cruel mischance of the morning, was a matter too important to be hastily decided: All she could do at present, was to order that not a single visitant should be admitted, until Sir Matthew and herself could determine what line of conduct they should adopt.

Sir Matthew, who could never reconcile himself to the deferment, still less to the forfeiture, of a feast, recommended that the grand dinner should take place by all means, urging with a characteristic manliness that it would be the

best possible opportunity of breaking the tidings to their acquaintance, and of disarming their taunts or ridicule by showing that they themselves viewed the critical detection of the impostor as a subject for festive rejoicing and for receiving the congratulations of their friends. With all her plausible politeness and bland self-possession, Lady Middleton did not feel herself equal to this task. She had no spirits, she said, for a party; Cecilia's appearance was entirely out of the question; there would be an air of indelicate bravado in giving the entertainment, when the family was placed in a predicament so awkward and embarrassing: and Sir Matthew reluctantly consented that messengers should be despatched to all the intended guests, apprising them that the dinner and the evening-party were unavoidably postponed.

This abeyance of the banquet, with the probable spoiling and certain vain cost of its materials, being one of those rare trials that the constitutional good-temper of the baronet could not well endure, he indulged in taunts and sar-

casms against his wife on the subject of Sir Dennis, which provoked recriminations of no very conciliatory nature. With the usual sapience of people who can discover the probability of a thing after it has happened, however blind to it before, Lady Middleton now recognised the habits of the valet and the hair-dresser in many of those little traits of the sham Sir Dennis's demeanour which she had received at the time as indisputable evidences of gentility; while, in his fustian language, theatrical airs, and stage-struck heroics, she could as evidently discern the manners of the strolling player. Nor was Sir Matthew deficient in that postliminous species of second sight to which we have alluded, though neither of them suspected that the impostor, who was by no means wanting in shrewd tact, had addressed himself in an especial manner to their respective foibles. Seeing her Ladyship's mania for every thing that appertained to fashion and the *beau monde*, he had assumed such airs of the dandy and the exquisite as he had been enabled to glean from plays and observation,

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pushing them perhaps to a little degree of extravagance in consideration of her Ladyship's civic origin, and presumed ignorance of the *juste milieu* in such matters. With Cecilia the same affectation, seasoned by an occasional dash of scenic genuflexion and rant, passed current for genuine specimens of *ton*; while, in his interviews with Sir Matthew, the knave, discarding much of his drawling and conceited foppery, had only sought to ingratiate himself by affecting a participation in the political and religious prejudices of his intended father-in-

paragraphs transmitted to the newspapers, with such a pompous account of the wedding. They appeared of course in all the journals, and the house was accordingly besieged on the following day with visitants and congratulatory notes, which entailed a whole series of explanations and replies, equally painful and humiliating. The contradictions immediately inserted in the papers, with the jibes and jeers, the taunts and ridicule to which they gave rise, subjected the unfortunate Lady Middleton to a new torrent of impertinence, in the form of elegantly written three-cornered billets, commiserating her ill-usage, or expressive of indignation at the licentious and scurrilous personality of the press; every one of which polite notes, such was the morbid exacerbation of her feelings, she considered as an intentional insult. Several days afterwards, when she ventured abroad, which Cecilia had not yet summoned courage enough to attempt, her Ladyship was rudely pointed out by the passengers as the object of all this unwelcome publicity. To fashionable notoriety

she would not have objected—but an exposure of this sort she found so annoying, that she determined to withdraw from London and the affair should blow over; or be superseded by some new nine-days wonder.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

GALE MIDDLETON.
VOL. III.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

ALE MIDDLETON.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"BRAMBLETYE HOUSE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
ARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1833.



GALE MIDDLETON.

CHAPTER I.

Mais, au moins, dites moi, madame, par quelle sort
Votre Clitandre a l'heur de vous plaire si fort.
Sur quel fonds de mérite et de vertu sublime
Appuez vous en lui l'honneur de votre estime ?
Vous êtes-vous rendue avec tout le beau monde,
Au merite éclatant de sa perruque blonde ?
Ou sa façon de rire et son ton de fausset
Ont-ils de vous toucher su trouver le secret ?

MOLIERE.

ON the day that her Ladyship formed this resolution, she received the following letter from her step-son at Brookshaw Lodge:—

“ MY DEAR MADAM,

“ If our joys, in the state of darkness to which we are all doomed, be but too often and too rapidly converted into sorrows, it cannot be denied that our seeming vexations will some-

times prove sources of comfort and consolation. Much as I regretted the severe illness that prevented my being present at Cecilia's intended marriage, I now rejoice that I was spared the pain of participating in a scene of disappointment and distress which I could have done nothing to alleviate. I have already written to congratulate my sister, as well as yourself and Sir Matthew, on the detection and defeat of the base contrivance for the destruction of her happiness; and I now take the liberty of addressing you, in the hope that I

“ My insurmountable objections to the pretended Sir Dennis I took the liberty of stating to you fully and freely, as soon as I understood that he had become a suitor to Cecilia. Antiquated as such notions may sound, I had conceived that a real gentleman, in addition to that restraining fear of God which constitutes the best bravery of a Christian, should be a patriot and a philanthropist; that he should be gentle, generous, and high-principled; courteous to the weaker sex, benevolent and gracious to his inferiors, polished and urbane to all. Not only did the sham Sir Dennis appear to me deficient in these good qualities, but I found him infected with many of their opposite vices. Forgetful of his Creator, and indifferent to his country, dissipation, frivolity, and the indulgence of an intense selfishness seemed to be the sole objects of his existence. Towards females his manners evinced an impertinent boorishness that would have disgraced a peasant; among friends and equals his conversation, utterly unintellectual, consisted of the most vapid common-places of the day, delivered

in an affected, drawling accent. Of the vulgarians and the lower orders, as he presumptuously termed the great mass of his fellow-countrymen, he never spoke except with an unmeasured insolence and contempt, while he would cringe to any leader of the **Exclusives**, especially if titled or high-born, with the most abject servility. To have been engaged in a duel; to have taken in a friend, either by a gambling-bet or in the sale of a horse; to have defrauded an honest tradesman by the non-payment of his bill; or to have figured in an

" That the manners and the character which are conceived to constitute a gentleman, will vary at different æras, I am well aware. In the grave, stately, and magnificent courtiers of the Elizabethan period, vying with each other for the honourable notice of their learned queen by excellence in arts as well as arms, I can recognise the chivalry of the drawing-room. The dissipated companions of the royal Charles, heartless and unprincipled as they were, distinguished themselves by wit, vivacity, and the possession of literary taste or talents. They who, at a later period, affected the formal and ceremonious politeness of the French court, were dignified by a graceful decorum and a punctilious sense of honour. But the modern dandy, at once exclusive and vulgar, ignorant and vain, servile and arrogant, clownish and conceited; not less selfish, sensual, and immoral, than his predecessors, and unredeemed by any of their better qualities, what claims can he advance to the proud appellation of a gentleman? His clothes are cut upon a fashionable model; he is conversant with a certain

conventional slang ; he can assume in his manners that lounging insolent nonchalance which sops and fools have determined to be the mode ! For proof how soon and how successfully these externals of vulgar gentility may be aped by the vulgar, I refer to the valet of the real Sir Dennis Lifford.

" I have gone into this analysis of a man of fashion, at much greater length than I intended, in the hope that you will not suffer any of that worthless tribe to entail misery upon our dear Cecilia, by becoming successful candidates for her hand. Bestow her, I beseech you, on a *real* gentleman, estimating his claims not by his exterior but his intrinsic merits ; weighing the essentials and disregarding the accessories ; valuing him for himself and not for the fashionable or unfashionable *coterie* to which he may belong ; preferring, in short, the humblest man whom God has stamped noble, to the proudest peer, if his rank and title be his only nobility.

" Once more I entreat you to pardon the freedom of this appeal, in consideration of my

fraternal love for Cecilia, and of the sincerity
with which I subscribe myself,

My dear Madam,

Your affectionate Son,

JAMES GALE MIDDLETON."

All reproaches are painful in proportion to their truth. During the perusal of this letter Lady Middleton's cheeks had more than once reddened with resentment, from a conviction that the censure of her conduct, implied though not expressed, was abundantly justified by the facts of the case. Although Gale had been too delicate to make any allusion to that subject, she remembered how often she had tauntingly desired him to take the sham Sir Dennis as his model. Always disliking her step-son, from his avowed contempt of fashionable frivolity, she was now embittered against him, because she felt conscious that she must appear ridiculous in his eyes, and she cast his letter aside, exclaiming, "A most impudent epistle, in spite of its affected respect; and the morbid mind of the writer is visible in every line.

What ! he would have me marry the girl, I suppose, to some such half-witted creature as himself ? What should *he* know of fashion and gentility ? Let him skulk in his laboratory, and send his wits wool-gathering after the philosopher's stone. Let him dive into the obscure haunts of the London poor, and be knocked on the head for his pains. Let him jump into a mill-dam to rescue a beggar's brat, and be rewarded with a dangerous illness. Poor semi-lunatic ! poor crazy Middleton ! after all, I should compassionate rather than condemn him."

Sir Matthew, who really felt grateful to the true Sir Dennis for the exertions which had preserved Cecilia from his roguish representative, proposed that they should call at his hotel to return their thanks in a more formal way than they had hitherto done, a suggestion which met with a ready concurrence from her ladyship, in the secret hope that it might lead to some beneficial result. Not having yet ventured out of the house Cecilia would willingly have been left at home ; but her scruples were

overcome by reminding her that she would go and return in the carriage : she was arrayed in her most becoming bonnet with the pink lining, in order that her pale cheek might benefit by its reflection ; and the party set off for the Clarendon hotel. In spite of her ladyship's obstructions, there were still ambitious and fashionable hankerings in her bosom, though she was too prudent to give them utterance. In her imagination, however, they might find a safe scope ; and Alnaschar himself never indulged in fonder reveries than those with which she amused herself during the drive to Bond Street. " It is still possible," she thought, " that the real Sir Dennis may take a fancy to Cecilia, who really looks remarkably well in that bonnet. How glorious would be my triumph should she, after all, become Countess of Ballycoreen ! The public and these pestilent journals would then be as obsequious to me as they are now scandalously insulting. Riding in my daughter's coronetted carriage, I could return with proper dignity and disdain the cut direct that I received from the impertinent and dis-

honest Lady Barbara Rusport ; nay, the Duchess herself, and her haughty friends should see that I despise them ; I would defy the malice and the lampoons of the formidable Tom Rashleigh ;—perhaps—I am certainly much better qualified for the post—perhaps I might succeed to the office of fashionable dictatress, which her grace cannot much longer sustain—and then—then—.” Her ladyship was spared the trouble of stating what signal revenge she would wreak upon her opponents, what indignities she would heap upon those who had slighted her, for the carriage stopped at the Clarendon hotel ; she learnt, in answer to her inquiries, that Sir Dennis had departed on the previous morning for Paris, and her vision of glory, fading rapidly from her mind, left its place to be supplied during the return home by disappointment and dejection.

Nothing now remained to delay the projected retreat from London, where she had become so painfully conspicuous, except her determination to call Mrs. Burroughs to account for introducing the sham Sir Dennis, and vouching him

to be a relation. That busy, bustling, and calculating personage, whose vulture-like instinct seldom failed to scent from afar, and to pounce upon the fragments of a feast with her capacious reticule, had never presented herself in Portland Place since she had slipped away from the vestry-room, although she must have been aware that the materials of the marriage banquet were "absolutely spoiling," to use her own phrase, for want of claimants and consumers. On quitting the church she had hastily sought her husband, urging him to offer his services to the genuine Sir Dennis in the prosecution of his valet, against whom she felt keenly incensed from an apprehension that she might be compromised by his imposture. Nor was she wrong in this conjecture. According to the established custom of making the weakest go to the wall, it was pretty generally resolved that Mrs. Burroughs, who, in point of fact had been mainly instrumental in pushing the counterfeit baronet into society, should be made the scape-goat for all those whom her representations had induced to notice him. Some instinctive foreknowledge

of this conspiracy confined its object for several days to her house, although, when Lady Middleton sought her out in this retreat, she ran forward to meet her with an air of easy assurance, exclaiming—"Ah, my dear friend! I am so vexed that a violent cold has prevented my calling in Portland Place!"

"Stay, Madam," interposed her visitant—"let me intreat that you will not call me your friend, for it is an honour that I am little anxious to share with the valet of Sir Dennis Lifford, even though you should be able to offer me the additional distinction of being your relative."

"Ah now, my dear Lady Middleton, I can forgive you for feeling hurt at that unfortunate affair. How cruelly were we all deceived!"

"Forgive me! I am not aware that I have done anything to require it: I am only at a loss to know how you can forgive yourself. Will you allow me to enquire by whom you were introduced to your relation, the strolling player, hair-dresser, and valet?"

"This is unkind and unjust: you must be

aware that when I spoke of him as being very distantly related to some part of my family, I alluded to the authentic Sir Dennis."

" You forget that you presented him to me as a near connexion of your own, vouching for his wealth and his respectability. May I again enquire who authorised you to guarantee his identity, for to this point every other is subordinate."

" Of the real Sir Dennis I have asserted nothing that cannot be well sustained: he is rich, his character unimpeachable, and his succession to the Earldom —"

" Nay, nay, we are not speaking of the real, but the sham Sir Dennis. Once more I beg to know by whom you were introduced to that impostor."

" Impostor you may well call him, and villain to boot! Dominick tells me that he will certainly be transported, though in my opinion that is letting him off a great deal too cheap. Such miscreants ought to be hung. Never have I been so imposed upon in my life, but I feel the mortification more on account of my

friends than on my own. What a beautiful bonnet! but you have such unrivalled taste. Positively I never saw you looking better in my life."

"Mrs. Burroughs, will you excuse my saying that as I called upon you with the firm determination of following up this enquiry to some positive issue, I cannot be deterred from my purpose by such studied evasion. You must either disclose the name of the party by whom the impostor was introduced to you, or you will find it difficult to escape from a suspicion which I trust you do not merit, and to which therefore I will not make a more distinct allusion."

"Suspicion! I do not understand you; but such is the gratitude of the world! When I presented him to you as not unlikely to prove a most eligible husband for your daughter, you confessed your obligation; and now, because I have been most cruelly deceived, as well as yourself, you give vent to insinuations equally ungenerous and unjust."

"I know by whom *I* was first deceived, or,

at all events, misinformed ; I came hither to ascertain by whom *you* were first placed in that predicament ; but since you refuse to satisfy me upon this point——”

“ Do not misrepresent me, Lady Middleton ; I refuse nothing. Being unconscious of offence, unless a venial indiscretion may deserve that name, I cannot have any wish for concealment. Not entertaining a moment’s doubt, when this most plausible pretender gave himself out as such, that he was the real Sir Dennis, I introduced myself to him, and conceived that I was doing a favour to my friends, by presenting him to them.”

“ I suspected as much. Your friends are infinitely obliged to you ; but as I have suffered so severely for being of the number, I hope you will excuse my withdrawing myself henceforth from the list.” With a smile of the most ineffable blandness and amenity, and feelings of the bitterest exacerbation, Lady Middleton curtsied and withdrew, deaf to all the entreaties and asseverations of Mrs. Burroughs, who loudly protested her innocence of any interested mo-

tive, or of the smallest wish to deceive, in the part she had so unfortunately acted. In this she did but speak the truth. The pitiful vanity, often indulged at the expense of veracity, which prompted her to claim consanguinity with every Irish family that was rich or titled, together with the sordid desire of turning the acquaintance to some account, had led her to introduce herself to the fictitious Sir Dennis, and to assist in making up a match with the daughter of Sir Matthew Middleton, whose house presented a most attractive fo-

whole blame of their own delusion, to which, however, some of the mammas had lent themselves from motives quite as selfish as those of Mrs. Burroughs. It was unanimously decided that her conduct had been most unguarded and unjustifiable, even if it could be cleared from suspicions of a fouler nature; and the whole party determined upon dropping her acquaintance.

Now that she was no longer in a situation to defend herself, every one had a charge to bring against her. The pickings and pilferings, the calculating contrivances and sordid manœuvres, the furtive beggings and borrowings, to say nothing of the more open rapine of this domestic Arab, who laid under contribution all that crossed her path, and never visited the drawing-room without an eye to the house-keeper's apartment and the replenishment of her omnivorous reticule, were exposed and condemned without mercy. Poor Mrs. Burroughs! she was not only cut by her friends, but cut up by her enemies. Tom Rashleigh, in one of his Sunday lampoons, entitled "a Dominical

letter to Mrs. Dominick," after making allusion to her reticule, and declaring that all was fish that came to her net, gave her the nickname of the cormorant, a sobriquet which proved equally adhesive and unfortunate. Its very applicability soon rendered it inapplicable, for it occasioned her character to be so thoroughly known, that the cormorant, had she devoured nothing but such prey as she could collect by her own foraging, might rather have been termed the chameleon.

On the day after the holding of this conclave, Lady Middleton received an unexpected visit from Sir Matthew's nephew and clerk, the demure, cold, formal, and priggish-looking Caleb Ball, whose thatchy mud-coloured hair, finical neckcloth, and leaden puritanical countenance, seemed to have remained immovable and immutable since she had last seen him. "I have taken the liberty of calling upon your ladyship," said the visitant bowing humbly, and not presuming to take a chair, "because I have tidings which I think your ladyship will be glad to hear."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Ball, but I cannot hear anything till you are seated," replied Lady Middleton, whose habitual politeness overcame even her dislike of this city grub, as she sometimes contemptuously termed him.

Keeping at a respectful distance, and placing himself upon the edge of the chair where he sat stiffly upright, Caleb continued, "I am just come from Bow Street, and I thought your ladyship would be gratified at learning that there is a fellow now in Newgate, whom we believe to be one of the ruffians that attacked my cousin Gale. Ever since that dreadful affair, I have been indefatigable in endeavouring to discover the villains and bring them to justice; but, in spite of the reward offered, I have never, till now, had the smallest hope of succeeding."

"The name of our family has been so much before the public of late," said Lady Middleton, slightly colouring, "that the fresh notoriety of a trial would be particularly disagreeable at the present moment."

"Truly so, Madam; your ladyship's remark

is exceedingly just ; but the Old Bailey Sessions will not be held till the twenty-fourth proximo. I am going immediately to Newgate to interrogate our informant, who is one of the felons in the prison, and if we find reason to believe his statement correct, I shall write to my cousin to come up from Brookshaw, that he may see whether he can recognise the party accused."

" Your diligence, Mr. Ball, is praiseworthy, and I trust you will succeed in your object," said Lady Middleton, coldly ; " but if you have nothing else to communicate, I shall be obliged to wish you good morning, as I have a particular engagement."

" Truly so ; I would not presume to detain your Ladyship for the world, but if I might venture to take such a great liberty, now that I am here, I would humbly prefer a petition on my own account. I would respectfully beg your ladyship's interest with Sir Matthew to get me taken into partnership, without waiting for the expiration of the present articles. Mr. Hobson has no objection, and if Sir Matthew

could be brought over, I am sure Mr. Thwaytes would follow."

" These are matters, Mr. Ball, in which I never interfere. Sir Matthew, I know, entertains the highest opinion of your integrity and commercial abilities, and you had better therefore apply to him."

" I have received so many favours at Sir Matthew's hands, that I feared I might be thought pushing and importunate. Business is my only pleasure; a partnership in the house of Middleton, Thwaytes, and Hobson, my only ambition ; and your Ladyship's influence is so great with Sir Matthew, that if I could prevail upon your ladyship —."

" Well, well," said Lady Middleton, rising, " I will take an opportunity of mentioning the subject to him."

After a profusion of thanks, each accompanied by a cringing bow, the visitant replaced his chair against the wall, and took his departure, making another profound bow at the door before he quitted the room.

" Low, servile, vulgar fellow!" exclaimed

Lady Middleton, as he withdrew. "What have I to do with advancing his interests, which I dare say, was the sole object of his visit? I have no desire to see such a thorough grub in partnership with Sir Matthew."

In compliance with the earnest solicitations of Cecilia, her mother now agreed to withdraw from London; but, submitting to the absurd regulations of fashion, even while she professed to have thrown off its yoke, she would not betake herself to the sea-side, though it was recommended as best adapted to restore her daughter's depressed spirits, because it was not yet the modish season. A retired cottage was accordingly hired at a few miles distance from London, so that Sir Matthew could occasionally run down to them. Here they passed three months in tranquil seclusion, Lady Middleton, who carefully eschewed the perusal of the scandalous Journals, wherein she was still condemned to figure, doing her best to forget the mortifying failure of the *soirée musicale*, the insult she had received from the Duchess and her friends, the still more annoying slights

of the overreaching Lady Barbara, and the manifold and humiliating vexations heaped upon her by the sham Sir Dennis. Cecilia, little sensitive as she was, could not so easily recover from the shock she had experienced. Her late distressing and degrading disappointment seemed not unlikely to entail consequences that might cling to her for the remainder of her life ; few suitors, she suspected, would face the ridicule or the contempt of the town by claiming a hand which had so nearly been bestowed upon a valet ; and, as she referred mournfully to the past, she regretted that, under the direction of her ambitious mother, she had given so positive a dismissal to her worthy and unassuming admirer Ned Travers.

CHAPTER II.

Man must either believe in the perfectibility of his species, or virtue and the love of others are but a heated and objectless enthusiasm.

E. L. BULWER.

WE return to Brookshaw and to Maple Hatch, where, in the interval since we left them, considerable changes had occurred. Hargrave making frequent visits to the Norberries, and thus maturing a passion which had continued to increase since his first interview, at last made a formal offer of his hand to Lucy, as they were strolling one morning over the common in front of the house. Too sedate a suitor to affect raptures and ecstacies, or despondency and despair, as the alternatives of his reception or rejection, he avowed his attachment with a frank fervour; pointed out the domestic advantages that would attend such a union

by its enabling her still to remain in the immediate vicinity of her father and sister, from whom she would scarcely be separated; regretted the narrowness of his income, which merely amounted to a competency; but expressed a confident persuasion that, if she would become his wife and share his humble abode, they might be blessed with a mutual happiness that would leave them nothing to desire.

"Dear! dear!" cried the blushing Lucy, clasping her hands together as he concluded,
"Are you really in earnest, Mr. Hargrave?"

"Can I be otherwise? Why should you for an instant doubt me?"

"Because it seems scarcely credible that so clever, so learned, so superior a person as you are, should condescend to think seriously of such a wild, giddy, inexperienced, uninformed girl as I am."

"Your humility makes you unjust. Say not wild and giddy, but delightfully sportive and vivacious; attractions which, in combination with your innocence and simplicity, constitute the great charm of your character. Uninformed

I know you are not ; this, indeed, would be impossible in the pupil of Miss Norberry ; and, as to your inexperience and unacquaintance with the ways of the world, believe me, dear Lucy, they only make me love you ten thousand times better."

" Oh, Mr. Hargrave ! how very kind and good you are ! I *must* run and tell Chritty ; she will be so delighted ! You cannot imagine how highly she thinks of you."

" Stay, stay !" cried the lover, clasping the hand of his lively mistress, who was about to fly towards the house. " I would rather hear that you were delighted, that *you* thought favourably of me. Tell me, I beseech you, that I am not indifferent to you, that you accept my offer, that you will allow me to consecrate my future life to your happiness."

" What am I to say, Mr. Hargrave ? Chritty has taught me never to utter a falsehood, which I am sure I should be doing, were I to deny that I feel most highly honoured and sincerely gratified by your offer."

" May I then infer that you do not reject it ?" asked the suitor, eagerly.

" I don't know what I ought to reply on such an occasion, and you will pardon me, I hope, if I should confess —. No, there cannot be any impropriety in speaking the truth ; I shall accept your offer with joy, if papa and sister think that I ought to do so."

" Ten thousand thanks, dear Lucy !" cried Hargrave, pressing to his heart the hand which he still held captive. " Of their consent and approbation I have little doubt, now that you allow me to cherish the delightful hope that I have succeeded in winning your affections. I hardly expected at first that I should ever be so fortunate."

" Why not ? I am sure you did me injustice, I have always had more regard for you than for anybody — except papa and dear sister. I love Chritty better than anything in the world, and if my acceptance of your offer would have carried me far away from her, I must positively have rejected your suit."

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" I feel too grateful, dear Lucy, for the first part of your avowal to be offended at the second ; nor shall you make me jealous of your excellent sister. May you always remain as frank towards me, and as affectionately attached to her, as you are at the present moment !"

There was, indeed, something singularly touching in the mutual attachment of these most amiable girls, the difference of whose years, though not sufficient to impair the sympathy of feeling, or congeniality of pursuit, which usually prevail between unmarried sis-

and sportive girl, volatile as she seems, can instantly become meek, obedient, and sedate when checked, even by a look, from the sister whom she loves ; if, while she shares her pastimes with an almost exuberant vivacity, she can assiduously participate in her graver duties ; if at one time she can cheer her moody father by her gaiety or her gambols, and at another soothe his sickness by the tenderest solicitude and the most watchful forethought, surely she possesses all the requisites of a maturer age for discharging the duties of a wife and ensuring the happiness of a husband."

Agile as the mountain chamois, Lucy, on reaching the gate of the cottage scuddled up the garden, and, panting with agitation, while she buried her glowing face in her sister's bosom, pressed her fondly to her heart, murmuring,—“ We shall not be separated, dearest Chritty ! I shall still see you almost every day, or I never would have given my consent.”

“ What has happened ? what has happened ? ” demanded the sister, tenderly returning her embrace. Lucy stole her eyes upwards,

and was so much amused with the expression of alarm in the countenance before her, that her own blushing features became suddenly mantled over with arch smiles, and she burst into laughter, exclaiming: — “ Oh ! nothing very terrible ; only Mr. Hargrave has made me an offer of his hand. Are you not surprised ? ”

“ Not in the least ; on the contrary, I fully expected it, and I am delighted beyond measure at finding I was not mistaken ; of all men in existence Mr. Hargrave is the one to make

"That is the very thing that puzzles me," replied Lucy, "only he is so very good and kind."

"Ay, you may well say that. What are you crying about?"

"Am I crying? I was not aware of it; only dear Chritty broke into tears when I told her of it, and so I suppose I cried for company."

"Then you are a couple of geese for your pains. You know I hate blubbering, it always makes me low; but nobody cares for *me*." An affectionate embrace reproached this unkind assertion. Chritty and Hargrave soon after made their appearance, and as the old gentleman, in spite of his grumbling propensities, was highly gratified by the projected match, he gave it a glad sanction, and was mollified, for the remainder of the day, into a mood of almost unprecedented complacency.

The fit of gloom and despondency into which Middleton had been thrown by the unexpected rejection of his suit, was not only of a more sombre hue, but of longer endurance than any he had previously experienced. Enshrouding

himself in a moral and physical darkness, which involved this world and the next, the past, the present, and the future, he would admit only partial glimpses of light into his study and his laboratory ; he abandoned his pleasant walks, and the cheering face of nature, that might have dispersed his black melancholy ; sitting at home, day after day, he fed the hypochondria that oppressed him by seclusion and inoccupation, and remained unsusceptible of even a momentary solace, except when he drew the inseparable miniature from his bosom, and pressed it

drinking in the scene with his tear-filling eyes, and then ejaculated with a pious fervour,—
“ Oh ! the beauty, the loveliness of the world ! Oh ! the greatness, the glory, the goodness of God !”

“ Enough !” said his companion, “ be sensible of these—feel them as you ought,—come hither daily to impress them upon your heart, and you cannot relapse into a prostration of spirits equally unworthy of you as a christian and a man.”

From this moment Middleton began in some degree to recover his self-possession, though he found it impossible to shake off altogether the incubus that darkened and oppressed his spirit. During the blackness of his fit he had repeatedly conned over the defamatory letter respecting Chritty Norberry, without perceiving, until his mind had recovered its lucidity, that the slanderous scroll which accused her of inveigling his affections for some unworthy purpose, was refuted by the fact of her having peremptorily rejected his suit ; and he would indignantly have torn the letter to pieces, had

He was relieved that the conversation might possibly lead to a discussion of the interview. In response to this episode but its power of impression, Cheshire imagined that of convincing him, even while it so firmly deluded the reader of his intent. He deserved no objection that was morally impermissible; it contained the most flattering expressions of regard, nay, it even made him an offer of her continual friendship, and he assumed himself of the robust ingenuity in having omitted to acknowledge this kindness, as well as of a culpable in-

Chritty herself. In following the dictates of her judgment, she had overrated the strength of her heart. It was not until after she had discarded Middleton that she felt how much she loved him—a discovery attended by many painful, and even humiliating, feelings, without tempting her however, even for a moment, to wish for a reversal of her decree. His many virtues and endearing qualities, as well as the eligibility of the match upon every other account, only made her the more regret that so many recommendations should be nullified by one objection, which she thought insuperable, since she believed it to be constitutional. In this she was mistaken, but she had not then seen enough of her lover to detect her error. At times she adverted to the circumstance of the miniature, but it was with a vague feeling of curiosity, rather than with any remains of the jealous displeasure that it had awakened at the moment.

Such was her frame of mind when Hargrave communicated to her the forlorn state of Middleton, from whom he had learned its cause;

and while he presumed not to question the propriety of her decision, he urged her by every consideration of humanity to lend her aid in rescuing their common friend, of whom they might so justly be proud as an ornament to human nature, from the lamentable despondency into which he was plunged. Deeply affected by this appeal, which awakened all the dormant tenderness of her bosom, Chritty eagerly professed her readiness to adopt any suggestion likely to forward the proposed object. Her visitant hinted that a letter, reasoning with the discarded suitor kindly but firmly and accu-

was the property of the neighbourhood which he had done so much to improve and to bless ; and that consequently he could hardly stand excused for shutting himself up, and indulging a selfish sorrow, to the neglect of those numerous dependents and claimants, who, though they might not experience any discontinuance of his charities, looked to the cheering presence and kind inquiries of their benefactor, in the almost daily rounds that he had been accustomed to take, as still more gratifying than even the receipt of his bounty. With Middleton, who made it the study of his life to live for others rather than himself, this argument was too cogent to be resisted, and he immediately resumed his visits and his wanderings, deriving from the personal exercise of benevolence, from communion with the healing and hallowing influences of nature, and above all, from the commencement of a correspondence with Chritty, which scarcely suffered a day's intermission, a new and gratifying interest in existence, which, though it could not altogether dispel the painful recollections by which he

was occasionally haunted, restored him to a state of comparative equanimity.

Thus did affairs remain for some time, during which no interview had taken place between Middleton and Chritty, the latter seeking to avoid a meeting, lest in the sympathy of the moment, she might be betrayed into a manifestation of feelings that might awaken unfounded hopes; the former, willing to forego the delight of an occasional conference, which would only aggravate the pangs of subsequent separation: both parties sensible of the awkwardness that must attend their first meeting. It soon took place, nevertheless, under circumstances calculated to aggravate this feeling of mutual embarrassment, for Middleton could not refuse, when invited by his friend, to participate in his nuptials; and Chritty's attendance, as the maid of her sister, was of course indispensable. The ceremony was performed in Brookshaw Church, a friend of Hargrave's officiating as minister. Whether their individual feelings became absorbed by the more potent interest of the solemnity, in which

ey had both so much reason to sympathize, that they had anticipated such perplexity from their meeting as not to be sensible of any when it actually occurred, we cannot determine, but certain it is, that neither Middleton nor Chritty were so much embarrassed as some of their friends. Aunt Patty, for the simple-witted woman insisted on being present, and her brother would not allow her to be thwarted, remained indeed as imperturbed as usual, simpering, curtsying, and offering her rappee to the bride, bridegroom, or the minister, with an inopportune politeness that on any other occasion would have provoked a smile. Mr. Norberry, though he had seldom testified much regard for his younger daughter, was so much affected when he had to give her away, and considered how much he should miss her at Maple Hatch, that he burst into tears, and then became angry with himself for not having been able to suppress his emotion.

Perhaps no bride had ever approached the altar more willingly, or with better-founded anticipations of happiness than Lucy—and yet

all her sprightliness, all her vivacity, were gone: she was utterly overcome, and wept like a child. The thought of leaving her home, and of parting from her dear Chritty, although she would still be living in her immediate neighbourhood, coupled with an oppressive sense of the new duties she was about to undertake, proved too much for her young and tender mind. Sympathising with his bride, even the manly Hargrave could hardly restrain the tear that glistened in his eye. In short, it was one of those weeping weddings that generally turn out the happiest in the sequel, since the emotion betrayed attests the sensibility and affection of the parties, as well as their deep sense of the solemn obligations imposed by the "holy state of wedlock."

It had been settled that the newly-married couple should proceed to Brighton, where they intended to pass some time, a friend of Hargrave's having undertaken to perform his clerical duties during his absence. A cold collation had been provided at the Parsonage, which being recommended by some of old Jemmy

Gale's "London particular" Madeira, the gift of Middleton, proved so acceptable to Mr. Norberry, as well as the minister who had officiated, that they remained discussing its merits until the carriage that was to convey away the bride and bridegroom came to the door. They drove off amid the tears and benedictions of their friends, when Chritty, after watching the vehicle till it was out of sight, turned from the door into the adjoining churchyard, not knowing that Middleton had strolled in the same direction. In a few minutes she saw him returning towards her, and as it was now too late to recede, she continued her course till they met, and then, with as unembarrassed an air as possible, she began to talk upon the fineness of the weather, the beauty of the prospect, and the solemn, penetrating, and intense sense of our own existence as well as mortality, elicited by walking in a churchyard, amid the mouldering relics of bygone generations.

"What hopes and fears—what happiness and misery," sighed Middleton, "once quickened the pulses and thrilled the hearts that

are now mouldering beneath our feet ! And yet these poor peasants were perhaps less wretched than those whose keener sensibilities only expose them to a more poignant wretchedness."

" In all classes I believe the human mind to be so plastic," replied Chritty, " that it soon shapes and accommodates itself to the circumstances surrounding it, so that there is less actual misery in the world than grumblers and gloomy moralisers are willing to allow. Life is a system of equivalents and compensations, which is perpetually approximating the enjoyments and sufferings between those two extremes of human condition, the highest of which has every thing to fear and little to hope, the lowest nothing to dread and every thing to gain. During a third, I might almost say during half, their existence, all mankind without distinction are in a state of absolute mental equality, and one, moreover, that is free from all anxiety."

" At what period ?" demanded Middleton, not immediately catching her meaning.

"When they are asleep," resumed Chritty ; "ay, and I suspect that in their waking feelings there is a much nearer approach to this exact equilibrium than is generally apprehended."

"Alas ! and what is this medium state ?" asked Middleton. "My late reading has not induced me to form a higher estimate of it than I should deduce from personal experience and observation. History, which has been not unaptly termed the Newgate Calendar of kings and rulers, presents to us an almost unvaried picture of wars, guilt, and wretchedness, leaving upon the mind a most disparaging impression of human nature."

"You cannot fairly judge of man from the records of history," said Chritty, who had purposely sought, and now prolonged the conversation, in the hope of disabusing Middleton of some of his desponding views. "Finding in vice a more striking and available theme than in goodness, and delighting in action rather than repose, historians, while they dilate with complacency upon sanguinary convulsions or

revolting crimes, leave unnoticed all that might redeem and soften the atrocities they record: the virtues and tranquillity of private life, and, indeed, all the finer portions of our common nature, evaporate in the process of historical analysis, so that it can be no wonder if we are presented with a gross residuum of blood-steepled and offensive fact."

" Which unfortunately is truth, nevertheless."

" Perhaps so, but not the whole truth. And even in this partial view, a fair retrospect of

vindicated by civilized man, that noble and rational being, formed in the express image of the Deity, who hath been enabled to carry his audacious thoughts into the highest heaven, to develop the mysterious laws that regulate the movements of the celestial bodies, and thus, as it were, to penetrate into the secrets of the Creator?"

"But mankind have sometimes fallen back, and lost what they had gained, as witness the dark ages."

"Such a moral eclipse can never recur. Since printing has given permanency and diffusion to the light of reason, it is impossible for a century to expire without bequeathing to its successor the inappreciable legacy of all its improvements, physical and moral. We are all and each of us the heirs of six thousand years, and living, even the very poorest, in the enjoyment of their accumulated wealth. Besides, there has always been an eventual progression, however it may have fluctuated. Compare the first savage with the last philosopher, consider what has been already accomplished,

remember that improvement accelerates its own progress, multiplies for ever its own progeny; and if we are to calculate our future advancement by the past, as why should we not?—what limits shall we fix to our aspiring hopes? Without lending ourselves to the reveries of a millennium, or believing in the perfectibility of a finite being, we may well feel persuaded that man has capacities for improvement which will eventually exalt his earthly destiny in a degree of which our barbarian ancestors could not even have formed a conception."

clude them to be inalterable. Man is the only improveable creature, the faculty must have been given to him for the purpose of its gradual development ; from which fact alone I should infer his constant melioration in this world, as well as his ultimate destination to a higher and holier state of existence."

" So far I may agree with you, but when you adduce a philosopher as a specimen of man in the nineteenth century, you are surely arguing from the exception rather than the rule."

" Not comparatively. The most ignorant peasant is a philosopher compared to his remote ancestors. Savages have driven back or exterminated the wild beasts ; civilized man is everywhere doing the same by the savage, who may be termed the human wild beast. Over the whole earth, once the property of barbarians and animals equally ferocious, civilization is extending itself, and as this advances and improves, the world will gradually be peopled with a higher and more intelligent order of beings. The comforts, luxuries, and intellectual enjoyments which no king could

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CHAPTER III.

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,

— Oh, woe is me !

To have seen what I have seen, see what I see !

SHAKSPEARE.

INDEPENDENTLY of the pleasure Sir Matthew Middleton anticipated from meeting his son, and contributing to the renovation of Cecilia's health, though she laboured under no other ailment than a slight depression of spirits, he was not sorry on his own account to obtain a short respite from the labours and anxieties of business. Arrangements were soon made, and the family arrived at Brighton, where a house had been engaged next door, as it chanced, to that in which Hargrave and his bride were

lodging. This bathing-place had been selected because it was nearer than any other to Brookshaw Lodge, and no sooner was the baronet installed in his new abode, than he wrote to his son, summoning him to join them without delay. Not having received any previous intimation of their intention to leave London, Gale was surprised by this unexpected notice, but as he was solicitous to see his father, as well as to embrace and congratulate Cecilia, he gladly prepared to obey the mandate.

Hargrave having been induced to prolong his stay beyond the expiration of the honeymoon, was still at Brighton; and his society, of which Middleton severely felt the loss, presented an additional inducement, had any been wanting, for betaking himself to the sea. But there was one deterring consideration which more than counterbalanced all these motives to compliance. He was now in frequent epistolary communication with Chritty Norberry, ever striking out some new subject of controversy, rather with the view of lengthening the discussion, than of arriving at any definite

result. His fair communicant strove hard to eradicate certain notions which she considered erroneous and hostile to his happiness; and although upon some points she had succeeded in converting him, he hesitated to acknowledge his conviction lest she should find in that admission an excuse for dropping the correspondence. Since the renewal of their personal communication at Hargrave's wedding, he had, moreover, ventured to resume his occasional visits to Maple Hatch, not reflecting that by thus feeding his hopeless passion he was only incurring the risk of fresh struggles for his already lacerated heart. A friendship between young persons of different sexes may be easily warmed into love; but to refrigerate love into friendship is a process of very rare and difficult accomplishment.

Notwithstanding the pain of tearing himself away from his mistress, whose gentle manners and ingratiating cheerfulness had unintentionally given fresh encouragement to his hopes, Middleton would not delay his departure, but proceeded forthwith to Brighton.

" Ha ! my dear boy !" cried Sir Matthew on his arrival, grasping and almost crushing his hand in the cordiality of his embrace, " glad to take 'ee by the fist again, with all my heart and soul ! Ah, lad ! know 'ee again now the black bandage is gone. Thought the pitcher that went so often to the well would get broken at last. How 's head ? not cracked is it ? I mean not worse than it was ; had 'ee there—hey, what ? — hick ! hick ! hick ! Ha ! ha ! ha !" The delighted father, who had not laughed so heartily for some time past, seemed to enjoy his own crowing cachinnation, for he victoriously re-echoed it, continuing all the time to shake the imprisoned hand.

" Thank you, dear Sir," replied the son, returning the embrace, " my head is sound, even if it be not sane, and I have now pretty well recovered the effects of my unfortunate cold bath."

" Ah, what, in the mill-dam, hey ? brave boy, brave boy ! born to be drowned never be hung, hey ? had 'ee again there—hick, hick, hick !" Sir Matthew buried his knuckle in his

son's side in token of his triumph, and then continued :—" Well, dear boy, sad doings since 'ee left us, out of the frying-pan into the fire —bad ending, worse begin — misfortunes ever come single—nothing but bad luck. First you get knocked o' the head—there 's not much in that—ha ! ha ! good !—then I get too much in my head, half seas over, scattered the grand supper-party right and left, capsized the tables, offered to buss the platter-faced duchess—must have been drunk to do that—rather kiss a halibut, or a batter-pudding, wouldn't you, hey ? Then Mounseer stole off with all the plate ; rascal ! wish I had him here—give him something to run for, but what can 'ee expect from a Frenchman ? Then came that affair of the Brummagem Sir Dennis—caught a Tartar there—ought to have had my eyes open—sleeping poultry catch no fox—such a conceited jackadandy, and talked so much nonsense, thought he must ha' been a man of fashion—had 'em there ! Scoundrel ! go to Botany Bay—but hush ! here comes Meg and Ciss."

Cecilia embraced her brother cordially, and yet with a feeling of awkwardness, for the humiliating events since their last interview recurred to her mind, and brought a blush to her cheeks. Lady Middleton received him with undiminished courtesy, her smile being even more bland and benignant than usual, because she had not yet forgiven him for the letter he had written on the subject of the counterfeit Sir Dennis. Gale, however, who had been latterly in a mood of rare quietude, owing to the state of affairs at Maple Hatch, and who was now exhilarated at meeting his family after a separation of some time, suspected not the hollowness of her ladyship's inquiries, and seeing nothing around him but smiles of welcome, gave such cheerful vent to the gratification he felt, that Sir Matthew exclaimed. "Fegs, Gale! think that polt o' the head and souse in the water ha' done 'ee good; used to be as down in the mouth as the root o' my tongue, and now you can cheer up a bit. Give 'ee joy, dear lad! long lane got no turning; laugh and grow fat; lost your long face, and I 'spose I

found it ; quite in the suds lately, nothing but mischief and bad debts. Never mind—turn and turn about—heads I win, tails you lose, fair play 's a jewel—hey ! what ! hick !”

“ I am sorry to hear of your losses, sir, but we are come to Brighton, I hope, to forget all our troubles, and to enjoy ourselves ; for the purpose of assisting you in which good object, I have ordered over some of my godfather's ‘London particular’ Madeira, your favourite wine.”

“ Have 'ee, boy ? — didn't think got so much gumption in 'ee ; but none know how the shoe wears, but them that pinch it. A blot's no blot till it's hit. And I've sent down two hamper-s of prime old port — only wants drinking. Ah ! we've lost Sir Dennis : what a pity such a rare three-bottle fellow should turn out a rap, a raff, a Brummagem ! Anybody dine with us to-day—hey—what ?”

After an animated and cheerful conversation, during which Middleton carefully abstained from any unpleasant allusion or inquiry, he mentioned that his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Har-

grave, were next-door neighbours, and asked permission to introduce them. This being readily granted, he withdrew and called at the next house. What was his amazement and delight, on entering the drawing-room, to see Chritty, whom Hargrave had brought over a few hours before from Maple Hatch, intending to retain her as their visitant until they returned home. In a moment of surprise it is difficult to conceal the feelings. "Miss Norberry here!" cried Gale running towards her, his face glowing with joyful animation, "Oh! what an unexpected pleasure!"

"Indeed, Mr. Middleton, it is mutual," said Chritty, advancing to shake hands with him, while the blush that stole over her features, and the sweet graciousness of her countenance, created beauty where there was none. "Meeting any of our acquaintance, whom we imagined to be at a distance, is always so gratifying!" she continued with a more reserved air, for she feared she had betrayed too marked and fervent a cordiality, and gently withdrew the hand which Gale had retained.

"Gratification is far too tame a word to express *my* feelings," said Gale, gazing tenderly at her as he spoke. "Mine is a sensation of delight, heightened into ecstasy by surprise."

"Superinducing a temporary absence of mind," said Chritty smiling, "for you seem to have forgotten that Mr. Hargrave and Lucy are in the room."

"Pardon me, my good friends," said Middleton, shaking them most heartily by the hand, as if anxious to atone for his momentary oblivion.

The conversation now became general, and was pursued for some time with so much earnestness, that, until accidentally reminded of it, Gale never recollect ed the object of his visit which was to introduce his companions to their neighbours. Accompanied by Chritty, they proceeded next door, where he presented Hargrave to his family, who were already acquainted, though but slightly, with the Norberries. Lady Middleton disliked them all. The father was poor and a vulgarian; Chritty she pronounced to be odd and unfashionable; and as she suspected her son's attachment, and could

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assuming, with a mock gravity, the most demure look imaginable, making a parade of her keys, and acting for a few minutes the part of the sedate, plodding housewife. Anon would she forget herself, and relapse into girlish playfulness, presently, however, discovering her heedless levity, and apologising for it, half in jest, half in earnest, with such a mixture of arch vivacity, humble deprecation, and blushing, beautiful confusion, that it was difficult to say whether she appeared the most fascinating and bewitching as the discreet spouse, the sportive vivacious girl, or as the embarrassed bride, imploring pardon for having inadvertently jumbled all three characters together. In the eyes of Middleton, she had never seemed half so lovely, half so inconsistent, or half so entertaining; his thoughts as well as eyes reverted to Chritty, and he was more than once tempted to envy his friend the felicity of being married.

At this season there was not much gaiety at Brighton, but shortly after their arrival they were invited to an evening party and a little

amateur music, by a Lady Bishopstown, who, finding some difficulty in filling her rooms, wrote a polite letter to Lady Middleton, requesting she would bring with her any of her friends who were fond of singing, as she expected a Miss Horton, whose vocal powers were of the very first order. "Even in our ashes live their wonted fires :" Lady Middleton had sworn all fashionable gaiety, and had professed an intention, on dear Cecilia's account, to live quietly and recruit their strength while they were at the sea-side ; but there was no resisting an invitation from Lady Bishopstown, third or fourth cousin to the Marchioness of Pentweezele, with whom, by the by, it was little honour for any one to be connected. A gracious answer in the affirmative was accordingly despatched ; Sir Matthew, in bantering allusion to his own misconduct at the concert in Portland Place, declared that he would have nothing more to do with caterwauling parties, for fear of accidents and fat duchesses ; but his son offered to supply his place, provided that he might add to their number Hargrave, his

bride, and her sister, the former of whom was passionately fond of vocal music. To this proposition his mother smilingly objected that the carriage would not conveniently hold five, and that although people might wink at the want of style in Mrs. Hargrave, who was a clergyman's wife, there was a deficiency of fashionable dress and appearance about Miss Norberry, which—”

“ Excuse my interrupting you,” cried Gale ; “ with regard to the first difficulty, it will easily be removed, as I should prefer walking ; and as to the second, if Miss Norberry be not arrayed in the last new fashion, still less am I, and I will therefore stay at home, and not give you any occasion to blush for the cut of my clothes.”

“ What strange notions you entertain, my dear Gale ! In a man there is always an excuse ; he is an eccentric or a humourist, and affects unfashionableness ; but for a girl there is no such redeeming plea.”

“ Humbug !” cried Sir Matthew, “ ha'nt 'ee got rid of all that nonsense yet ? what's the matter with the girl ? handsome is as handsome

does—dress'd well enough, though she han't got saddle-bags at each shoulder, so big as yours and Ciss's. So much the better: not so great a donkey: had 'ee both there. Poor surly Sam! down in the world now—like to be civil to his daughter—one good turn deserves another—life's uncertain—gone to-day, here to-morrow.—I say she *shall* go—hey, what hick?"

As Sir Matthew spoke as if he meant to be obeyed, the lady bowed graciously, saying—“Nay, if you make a point of it, I shall of course submit, although for more reasons than one, I am surprised at your blindness in urging the request. The strange rural-looking daughter of a bankrupt drysalter must of course be a proper person to present to Lady Bishopstown.”

“Why not? doesn't bite nor kick, do she? good as her ladyship, I'll warrant: a king may look at a cat, I s'pose: never mind—how can 'ee have the heart to turn up your nose at her, when her poor father's not worth a penny?—hey, hick!”

On the night of the party, Gale walked to

the residence of Lady Bishopstown, the rest following in the carriage. They were late, for Lady Middleton had a perfect horror of being in good time, so that the principal drawing-room was already full when they arrived. After their presentation to the lady of the mansion, who stood near the door to receive her guests, Hargrave pushed forward through the throng, in order to secure a seat for Lucy, which he had accomplished, and was returning to escort Chritty to join her, when he started in evident amazement, reddened, and turning to Middleton, whispered in his ear—"What an extraordinary coincidence! I have again encountered her at the sea-side. How strange! Heaven defend us against any such tragical catastrophe as attended our last meeting!"

"Of whom are you speaking?" demanded his friend.

"Of the fair but fickle girl who once possessed my heart; of her whose name I would not mention to you; of her whom I last beheld at Eastbourne, attired in a gala dress, and stretched insensible upon the dead body of her

affianced husband, while the thunder rocked the house, and the lightning flared through the deserted ball-room. Let her not see me; I would not hurt her feelings if I can help it, nor prevent her singing, for she is a most accomplished vocalist."

"Point her out to me," said Middleton, curious to behold the inconstant beauty whose violated vow had entailed upon her so severe a punishment.

"I wish not to look at her again, lest she should recognise me, which, if I may judge by

" You have told me enough ; remain here in the door-way, and I will presently bring your wife to join you." With this intention Middleton made his way, not without difficulty, towards the piano ; but no sooner had he beheld the fair and handsome wearer of the red roses than he stood as if transfixed, gazing intently upon her, while his face became agitated with deep emotion. Its expression, however, was an unimpassioned calmness compared to the sudden agony that convulsed the features of the fair girl when she caught a glimpse of him. Her very lips, half opened with the starting exclamation that had burst from them, became deadly white, she trembled violently, and, sinking into a chair where she was partially concealed by a large music stand, would apparently have fainted, had she not inhaled the pungent odours of a vinaigrette. In a few minutes, appearing to have recovered her self-possession, she rose up, and passed slowly through the crowded visitants into the back drawing-room, addressed by several as she moved, but making no reply, and seeming not to notice their salutations.

Middleton, not yet recovered from the first bewilderment of his surprise, and almost unconscious of his movements, followed in the same direction, but, on casting his eyes around the apartment, he could not perceive the object of which they were in search. While thus gazing with a thrilling heart, half disposed to believe that he had been deceived by some fleeting vision, the coinage of his fancy, a servant approached, and told him in a low voice that if his name were Middleton, a lady desired to speak to him immediately. Filled with a thousand vague conjectures at this state,

me, Mr. Middleton ! for God's sake do not betray me ; I shall go mad at once if you divulge the fatal secret. I believe I am mad already from the very fear of it, for at times I know not what I say or do. You once respected, you once loved me, you were once about to make me your wife—Remember, oh remember this, and have pity upon me!"

"Unhappy girl!" exclaimed Middleton—"rise from this unbecoming posture. Why have you given way to so perilous a burst of passion; why do you thus appeal to me? Have you not my solemn vow of secrecy? Remember you! Alas! can I ever forget the name of Clara Manning?"

"I hate, I abhor that contaminated appellation. How much reason I had for wishing to change it, you know too well. I am now Miss Horton, which name I have taken after a deceased relation, who left me a portion of his fortune."

"I am glad that you are enriched, I shall be still more so to find that you are reformed and respectable."



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said Middleton, solemnly; "and now, Miss Manning—"

" Utter not that hated name."

" As Miss Horton, then, I implore you to rise from this unseemly attitude, to compose yourself, and to return to the drawing-room, whence your absence will be observed. You are expected to sing."

" Sing ! am I in a state now to warble love songs. Oh ! if you knew what it is to mingle with the pure and innocent, and to feel that I have no right to their society ; to dread every minute the discovery that would drive me from it with ignominy ; oh ! if you knew what it is to sing moral or cheerful songs with a guilty and an aching heart, you would pity, you would forgive the wretched, wretched——"

" Nay, nay, no more of this," said Middleton, raising her from the ground ; " I have forgiven you long since, and Heaven knows how sincerely I pity you."

" Do you, do you indeed ? it is more than I deserve. I could have submitted to your reproaches, your anger, your contempt even ;

but your unmerited kindness I cannot, cannot bear."

Overcome by her feelings, the miserable girl burst into tears, and sunk sobbing into his arms at the very moment when the door was opened by Chritty Norberry, who came to assist Lucy in searching for her shawl, which she had been unable to find, and to which she attached a particular value, because it was a wedding present from her husband. Struck with sudden astonishment, both coloured deeply, and, starting back, were about to withdraw

immediately assisted to a carriage that she might be taken home. While the sisters were expressing the sincerest regret at her indisposition, and arranging her shawl so as to protect her from the night air, she begged them to explain to Lady Bishopstown that sudden indisposition was the cause of her abrupt departure, and then, leaning on the proffered arm of Middleton, ascended a carriage that was in attendance, and drove off, without perceiving Hargrave, who was waiting on the stairs.

It was not until relieved from the embarrassment of her presence, that Middleton felt the full awkwardness of the situation in which he had been surprised, calculated as it was to awaken misconstructions which, in the present state of his relations with Chritty, he would have given the world to prevent, and which were nevertheless totally unsusceptible of explanation on account of his solemn vow of secrecy. Not knowing what to say in this dilemma, he remained silent; while the sisters, scarcely less perplexed than their companion, busied themselves with a nervous earnestness

in searching for the shawl. It was found at last, and they were about to retire from the apartment, when Middleton, unable to bear the thought of their departing under erroneous impressions, though he could not fully remove them, said, hesitatingly, Miss Norberry—Mrs. Hargrave, you will much oblige me by not mentioning what you have seen, a request which I do not urge on my own account, but out of consideration for —.” The delicacy of his situation, his pledge, and the fear of throwing any suspicion on Miss Horton, checked his tongue, and after a pause he continued. “ My lips are unfortunately sealed by an engagement, an inviolable oath that prevents my explaining what has occurred. This interview was not of my seeking. I entreat you once more not to mention it, and to believe me, when I assure you upon my honour, that I have never seen Miss Manning since I left Cambridge.”

“ Miss Manning!” cried Lucy. “ It is Miss Horton, the lady who was to have sung to us.”

“ Yes, Miss Horton, Miss Horton, a very

fine singer : I hope you are perfectly satisfied," said Middleton, too much agitated to weigh his expressions. He looked appealingly at Chritty, who perceived his distress, and, believing that any further colloquy would increase it, bowed her head as if in acquiescence, took her sister's arm, and exclaiming, with an assumed air of indifference, " Come, Lucy ; Mr. Hargrave will think *we* are lost as well as the shawl," led her out of the room.

Immersed in various thoughts, but all of the most painful kind, Middleton remained for some time fixed to the spot where he stood, until the entrance of a servant roused him from his abstraction, when he seized his hat, and hurried out of the house, utterly forgetting the party upstairs. Without knowing whither he bent his steps, he wandered to the esplanade on the West Cliff, and hurried rapidly onwards, revolving in his mind the occurrences at Cambridge in which Clara Manning was concerned, and to which he could never revert without the keenest pain ; or wondering what conclusions Chritty Norberry would draw from the scene

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knocked at the adjoining door, without discovering his error until he was ushered into the presence of Hargrave. "This is kind of you," exclaimed the latter, "I was in hopes you would look in before you went to bed, that you might explain your strange interview with Clara Manning, my once affianced mistress, whose name I took so much pains to conceal from you, while it appears that you have long been acquainted with her. How singular that you should never have heard of her adventure at Eastbourne."

"When I knew her at Cambridge, I had learned nothing of her previous history. Concealments of all sorts were practised upon me: I can explain nothing. Let the misfortunes or misconduct of Clara Manning be forgotten with her name, which she has changed to Horton, though she is still unmarried. Unhappy girl! let us both seal our lips as to her past life. Be ever grateful to Heaven, dear Hargrave! you have had a most providential escape."

"Of that I am aware, and I trust not

unthankful, either for the evils that I have escaped, or for the blessings that are vouchsafed to me. Perhaps you are similarly circumstanced, for I suspect that this fair warbler won your youthful heart, as she had previously conquered mine. Were you, too, jilted?"

"Ask me no questions I implore you. I am bound to silence by a solemn vow. Since I left Cambridge, I have never seen her till this night: I trust I shall never behold her again, and to secure this object, as well as to spare the poor girl the pang of again meeting me, it is my intention to return to Brookshaw tomorrow morning."

"I shall remember and respect your vow, mysterious as it appears, but you had better defer your return for two or three days, when we, also, shall be journeying homewards.

Upon this subject Middleton declared his resolution to be immovable, wished his friend good night, withdrew to the next house, and immediately retired to bed, though the recent adventure had been too stimulant of unplea-

sant recollections and anxious forebodings to allow him for some time to forget them in sleep.

Nor could Chritty, any more than her lover, bury the singular occurrence of the evening in oblivious slumber. As she lay in bed, it furnished continued food for fresh conjectures and painful misgivings. She remembered to have heard a vague rumour of some love affair in which Middleton had been engaged at Cambridge : it could now be hardly doubted that Miss Horton was the object of his attachment ; and though he declared that he had never seen her since he left college, he did not affirm that he had never corresponded with her ; he did not deny that he carried her miniature in his bosom, and occasionally pressed it to his lips and his heart, for of whom but her could it possibly be a portrait ? How could all this be honourably reconciled with his avowed love to herself and the offer of his hand ? It appeared that Miss Horton had changed her name ; he had called her Miss Manning ; he had desired herself and Lucy

not to mention the tender interview of which they had become accidental spectators ; he had declared his own lips to be sealed by an inviolable vow. Here were change of name, mystery, and concealment, ratified by a solemn oath, and all savouring strongly of criminality, or at least of some grave misconduct, in which her judgment told her that Middleton must be deeply implicated, for she knew him to be naturally as frank and open as the day. Had he not moreover secret enemies who had assailed his life ? All these suspicious circumstances,

CHAPTER IV.

“ Her divine skill taught me this :—
Thus from every thing I saw,
I could some instruction draw,
And raise pleasure to the height,
From the meanest object’s sight.—
By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough’s rustelling,
By a daisy, whose leaves spread,
Shut when Titan goes to bed,
Or a shady bank or tree,
She could more infuse in me,
Than all Nature’s bounties can
In some other wiser man.”

GEORGE WITHER.

THE first interview of Middleton and Chritty, after their return to their respective homes, occurred at the Parsonage House, whither Hargrave and Lucy had invited them. Middleton was embarrassed, from a recollection of what had occurred at Lady Bishopstown’s, and his

inability to explain it ; but the cheerful and easy self-possession of Chritty, and the cordiality of her reception, quickly reassured him ; while the sprightly Lucy, rallying him on his grave looks, exclaimed, “ The Turks pray to their prophet against sorrowful faces, which they consider sinful—so do I ; and as a penance for your presuming to enact the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, and in my presence, I order you to escort Chritty to the north seat of the church-yard, that she may see what an improvement we have made in the view, by pulling down the old barn. Hargrave is visiting one of his sick parishioners, and I cannot go myself, having some household duties to discharge. Dear, dear ! what a torment is married life ! One has always some worrying, pleasant, troublesome, dear, delightful, little occupation to fill up one’s time. Heigho ! it’s quite miserable to be so happy all day long.” The playful housewife jingled her bunch of keys, and assumed such a lackadaisical yet beautiful expression of mock distress, that Chritty laughed outright, while a languid smile passed over

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us be more contented; but it is the unfortunate property of rank, riches, and superiorities of all sorts, that, while they do not make their possessors happy, they render others miserable by exciting their envy."

"But will you not admit that there is a levelling principle at work, which is constantly tending to equalize the enjoyments of all ranks? In intellectual pleasures, the most exalted of any, already are the educated poor almost upon a par with the rich, and so far they may be said to have attained a comparative golden age."

"Brought, as I have been, into personal contact with some of the least favourable specimens of my fellow-creatures, both male and female, how can I imagine them to constitute any portion of even a comparative golden age?"

"By judging from mankind in the mass, and not from individual instances. Eminently wise and useful was the counsel given by a lately deceased philosopher* to a friend, whose views were not altogether dissimilar from your own."

* Sir James Mackintosh.

‘ Allow yourself,’ said the sage, ‘ to see the great loveliness of human virtue amidst all its imperfections, and employ your moral imagination, not so much by bringing it into contrast with the model of ideal perfection, as in gently blending some of the fairer colours of the latter with the brighter hues of real experienced excellence, thus heightening the beauty, instead of broadening the shade which must surround us, until we waken from this dream in other spheres of existence.’ ”

“ I want not quotations but realities.”

“ Rather say you have a morbid craving for the gloomy in preference to the gladsome. The first step towards either goodness or happiness, is to believe in their existence. Are there then no pleasant realities? And is this august, this majestic, this beautiful, this delightful world to be termed a doleful dungeon, or a vale of tears? What monstrous ingratitude! Enjoyment is the natural state of existence; our senses, instead of being limited, as they might have been, to purposes of mere existence, are made to minister unto us a thou-

sand superfluous gratifications, if any thing can be deemed superfluous that creates an innocent pleasure. What incalculable, what ineffable delights, apart from all objects of utility, are let in upon us by the eye, by the ear, by the palate, by the sense of smelling ! Why is the jocund earth, our magnificent banqueting-hall, garlanded with flowers, odorous with perfumes, and melodious with all varieties of grand and dulcet music, but that the abundant and delicious festival which is incessantly renewed for all animated beings, making their existence a perpetual jubilee, may be rendered as variously delightful as possible, and fill the mind of the reasoning guest with pious gratitude to the Creator, for the blessings and delights that he hath so profusely scattered throughout the whole creation ? Strange that this universal love which our common Father extends to all, without discrimination of country or of creed, should not have imbued his sons with stronger feelings of fellowship, brotherhood, and toleration !”

“ You have enumerated delights for which it

behoves us to be thankful ; but, after all, these are but sensual pleasures, which we share with the animals that perish."

" Nay, not the greatest of all. Consider the illimitable range of our intellectual delights, in art, science, and literature ; reflect upon the charms of love and friendship, and of all those sweet charities, affections, and sensibilities which, when they flow in the channel intended by nature, are perpetually bathing our hearts in joy."

" One might apply to your fancy, Christiana, what was said of the Venus painted by Zeuxis, that it seemed to be fed upon roses, for you certainly see every thing *en couleur de rose*, and I envy you that happy faculty of enjoying existence which I, alas ! am utterly unable to attain. Even could you persuade me to change my desponding views as to the miserable destiny of man in this world, which I confess you have in some degree shaken, it would not allay the fears that beleaguer me as to his future fate."

" It ought to do so, if analogy and fair de-

duction have any influence over your mind? What we see is chiefly valuable to us, as an imperfect shadowing forth of what we are incapable of seeing. If, in this our fleeting existence, God has provided for our habitation so magnificent a palace, and has been careful to lavish upon us such varieties of enjoyment, think you not that, in the future state which is to endure for ever, the tender love and mercy of the Creator, more necessary to us by all the difference between life and eternity, will be immeasurably more considered than the claims or demerits of the creature? That the benevolent, the indulgent Father of his children in their perishable state, can become inexorable towards them when they are immortal, it is difficult to imagine; still less that, without reference to the good or evil they may have committed, he can capriciously elect some to glory and doom others to perdition."

" You are alluding to the doctrine of predestination, which I hold to be supported by positive texts of Scripture."

" And which I presume to think refuted by

the general scope and spirit of the holy writings. It is a trite illustration, but you must allow me to repeat, that texts are like the hairs of a horse's tail, which in their connected form conduce to purposes of beauty, protection, and utility, but which, when extracted singly, are only fit for snares and springs. From any such passages that appear to be inconsistent with the divine goodness I would appeal to the bible of the universe, on whose three leaves of earth, sea, sky, God's own hand hath stamped in characters that all may read, while none can alter or interpolate them, justice, mercy, and all-embracing love."

" You admit, then, that the doctrine of predestination is not to be refuted from the Scriptures themselves."

" It is presumptuous, I am aware, in an unqualified girl like me to converse, and still more so to write upon such subjects; but I trust you will excuse the attempt in consideration of the motive, when I inform you that, with the hope of removing impressions injurious to your peace of mind, I have drawn up a

little paper on this subject, deriving my arguments solely from the Scriptures. Read it with indulgence, and if you remain unconvinced by my reasonings, at least pardon the freedom with which they are urged."

"Read it! pardon you, my dearest Miss Norberry!" cried Middleton, taking the paper and pressing it respectfully to his lips. "Every word of it shall be precious to me, as a flattering, a delightful proof of the interest you descend to take in my happiness, and, whatever may be the result of its perusal, I tender you my heart-felt thanks for the kindness that dictated its composition. I have pleasure in confessing that our last colloquy has to a certain extent made a convert of me, and that I do not think quite so unfavourably of human destiny in this world as I once did."

"It delights me to hear you say so. Be assured that the conviction of the great and constant improvement of our species is a lofty, virtuous, and ennobling theory, which it is beneficial to adopt, even with an enthusiastic confidence; since to believe assists to realise it.

This cheering faith reconciles us to the lot of humanity, even when we behold it under the darkest occultation, by the persuasion of its final and effulgent emergence. Prompting to all that is great, and good, and glorious, it incites us not to pass through life like a vessel through the waves, or an arrow through the air, leaving no trace behind; but to make some deposit, however humble, upon the altar of human improvement, which may show that we have not lived for nothing; that we have at least contributed a mite towards the advancement of our species."

As she pronounced these words Chritty rose and returned towards the house, accompanied by Middleton, whose thoughts were so intent upon what he had just heard, that he uttered not a syllable until the liquid voice of Lucy, playfully rallying him upon his abstraction, dispersed his reverie. During the remainder of the visit, however, he continued silent and absorbed, musing deeply upon the colloquy in the churchyard, which had awakened in his mind a train of anxious and engrossing reflec-

tions. Sensible of his unfitness for society, and impatient to peruse the manuscript placed in his hands, he made an excuse for retiring early to his own house, and, throwing himself into a chair by the parlour window, drew forth Chritty's paper, and eagerly commenced its perusal. It was not his custom to give any orders respecting his meals, which were regularly prepared and sent up by his servants, without awaiting any particular instructions. Concluding from the early hour of his return that he had not yet taken tea, Robin brought it up, and left the room, without being noticed by his preoccupied master. After a short interval he re-appeared, and observing that no progress had been made during his absence, began to pour out a cup, when Middleton, withdrawing his eyes for the first time from the paper, apologised for the trouble he had given, and desired him to take away the apparatus, as he was too busy to attend to any thing at that moment.

"Well, sure enough, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good," said the old man.

"Madge and I can have a second tea instead of supper, and that will make the matter all square and idiomatical."

The good dame, who, like most of her sex and station, was always ready for a cup of souchong, sate down with her husband, but had no sooner tasted the beverage, than she declared the water to be so badly smoked, an accident for which she could not account, that it was impossible to drink it. She accordingly left the table to pursue her customary occupations, while Robin, who was either more thirsty or less squeamish than his wife, completed the meal by swallowing her portion as well as his own. Tired with the labours of the day he withdrew shortly afterwards to bed, where he had not long remained, when he was attacked by a burning heat and violent pain, accompanied with great nausea and an almost intolerable thirst. Madge ran down stairs to procure him some milk, which he drank with avidity, but his tongue and throat still remained parched and sore, notwithstanding his copious draughts, and the pains soon became

so acute, that the terrified wife hastened to her master, who was still reading in his study, and implored him see and give his aid to the sufferer.

Throwing aside the paper he had been studying, Middleton hurried to the garret, when he found the poor man's pangs so grievous, and his state so alarming, that, after prescribing such immediate remedies as he thought likely to alleviate his anguish, he descended to the stable, saddled his horse, and rode off for the apothecary, who resided at some distance, and with whom he returned in as short a time as possible to the lodge. On their arrival they found the patient still worse, labouring under much agony of body, and sinking when these attacks left him into a depressing conviction that his last hour was come, during which his speech was occasionally rambling and incoherent, though it generally bore reference to his gardening pursuits. By proper applications he soon obtained considerable relief, but his persuasion that death was approaching remained unaltered. "O dear doctor!" he ex-

claimed, "it's too late; my stomach be like a hotbed sowed with mustard and capsicums, and my kidney-beans be all burnt up as black as a coal."

" You are terrifying yourself without a cause," said the apothecary, " there is no immediate danger ; the powder of ipecacuanha has produced good effects already, which the emetic tartar will complete, and I shall order you an emollient decoction of marsh-mallows, to lubricate the excoriated coat of the stomach."

" O doctor ! I don't care about the coat of my stomach, it be hot enough to do without. It be no use, doctor, no use. Man be a poor bulbous creature, adequate to all sorts of contiguous disorders, and born to be mowed down like the grass. My hay-time be come, and it do seem to me, at this very moment, as if I heard Death whetting his scythe to have a cut at me, and saw his vision right afore me."

He fixed his eyes upon the apothecary, who drew back, apparently not liking to be mistaken for the principal, where he was only the agent.

"The Lord be good unto us all!" resumed the patient, "we be all of us a sort of quadruped flowers with two foot-stalks, only we be planted and put into the ground in this here world, in order to rise up in that 'ere, just as if I were to put a bulb-root into the lower garden and it were to shoot up atop o' the lawn border. After I be earthed round, I do hope I shall rise up all the fairer and whiter, like celery, and be finally transplanted into heaven, there to become a Jerusalem artichoke, and a star of Bethlehem."

"My good Robin!" said his master, "compose yourself, you have been assured that you are in no danger; but, even were it otherwise, you can have nothing to apprehend, for few, I believe, have passed through life so innocently as yourself."

"Ah master, master! the best of us be but poor idiomatical creatures, but I trust nobody won't meddle nor make with me in the other world in the way of doing me any harm. If I could just get into the gardens of Paradise,

with my spade, rake, and dibble, I might be of use in helping the other angels to dress the borders, and brush away the worm-casts, and plant edgings of box and thrift, and dung the melon-beds, and such like. Dear heart! dear heart! I fear there wont be no Cæsar nor Mark Antony to clip, and that's an infectious thought that keeps a worrying o' my heart like a maggot in a nut."

"I trust, Robin, that you will find favour and acceptance whenever your hour is come, but I repeat once more that your life is in no present danger."

"Well, sir, well; it be kind of you to say so, and to talk balm of Gilead to me; but I have a sort of angular, exotic feeling about my heart that tells me otherwise. If it were the will o' Heaven I should like to have stopped a little longer in this here garden, that I might have been audibly employed in saving the winter vegetables, and planting out lettuces, and cleaning the fruit borders, and shifting the sūriculas, and potting the carnation-layers, and

planting out my pipings, and looking a' ter my hawks, and such like. And there's the privet-hedge wants clipping: but it can't be helped, we that is animals can't expect to be evergreens that never dies. I have only one request to make of you, dear master, afore ever I drop to the ground, and as you were always kind and good to me, I do hope you'll grant it."

"That I will Robin, if it be in my power."

"Then promise me that you won't never let that thick-headed, succulent fellow, Tom Pendold come amigh Cesar and Mark Antony to

pillow, as if anxious to compose himself, when the apothecary made a signal to Middleton, and both retired quietly from the room, sending up Madge to sit by her husband, with orders that she should give them immediate notice if his sufferings returned.

CH.

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"I WOULD not
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son."

"Poison!" ejacu-
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child, would ever
or that if he had
prepare himself

and complacency we have just been witnessing? He believes himself to be on the brink of the next world, yet his dying thoughts are of the flowers he leaves behind him, and of those which he hopes to cultivate in another state of existence. Is this lamentable or enviable? Surely it comes within the latter category, if there be any truth in the averment that ‘where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise.’”

“He may have taken poison inadvertently, without any suicidal intention; or it may have been administered with an evil intent against his life by some enemy.”

“He cannot have an enemy in the world, for I am confident that he never wronged a fellow-creature.”

“Is it impossible, then, for an innocent man to be the object of secret and malignant villainy? Can he always secure himself against the attacks of assassins?”

“Alas! my own sad experience compels me to answer—no! But honest Robin, equally obscure and blameless in his life, hath borne his faculties so meekly, that verily angels trum-

pet-tongued might plead against ‘the deep damnation of his taking off.’”

The apothecary, who piqued himself upon his insight into human nature, though this imagined penetration only amounted to the vulgar error of assigning the worst possible motives to every action, and presuming the whole world to be fools or scoundrels, drew back his lips with a sardonic grin, and said, “Our lives would not be worth much if we had no better police than these angels with their trumpets; and as to its being impossible that honest Robin should have an enemy in the world, it is ‘a bold averment to make of any man that is married.’”

“I do not understand you, Sir,” said Middleton, gravely.

“As to this case, supposing the man to have been maliciously poisoned, which is at present uncertain, I affirm nothing: but in the course of my practice I have been more than once called in to a husband, whose wife has administered to him a composing draught, from

which it was not intended he should ever awake."

"If you are in earnest, Sir, you must allow me to tell you that your insinuations are most cruel and unwarrantable. If your remark be intended as a pleasantry, I can only say that it is grievously misplaced."

"Nay, Mr. Middleton, I have as yet advanced no charge and attempted no pleasantry. I have declared nothing, indeed, but my suspicion that the poor fellow has somehow been poisoned, a fact which I should like to ascertain, before I leave the house, by personal investigation and enquiry. If I mistake not I hear the wife on the stairs. Have I your permission to call her in and question her."

Immediate assent being given to this proposition, Madge was summoned to the parlour, when, in answer to the interrogatories of the apothecary, who cross-questioned her with the suspicious subtlety of an Old Bailey counsel, she stated that her husband, having made a hearty meal of the tea and cake intended for

her master, had retired to bed shortly afterwards.

"And how long had you made this cake?" asked the questioner, assuming the fact of its having been manufactured by Madge.

"I made it and baked it yesterday."

"And where have you put what was left?"

"There was none left: it was but a small one, and Robin ate it all."

"No doubt; had there been any left it might have told tales. But did you not taste any of it yourself?"

"No, I am not fond of they cakes."

"You are quite right, no more should I be. Do you mark, Mr. Middleton, do you mark? pray attend to her replies. But as you told us your husband drank so copiously of the tea, you joined him of course in that part of the meal?"

"No, I didn't: I found the water smoky, so I didn't drink more than a drop."

"Ha! ha! right again, very right. Do you mark, Sir, do you mark? And so your husband never found out that the water was

smoky : very extraordinary ! And pray what became of the tea-things ? I should like to see them."

" I washed them up, as soon as he had done, and put them away."

" No doubt, no doubt. On such occasions, if upon no other, the tea-things are sure to be instantly washed up and put away. Do you mark, Sir. And the tea-kettle in which the water was boiled : what became of that ? did you wash that out, also ?

" No, I left it on the hob, just as it was."

" Ah ! then there 's nothing in *that*, I dare be sworn. And you have had no visitors to the kitchen this afternoon, you say, not a soul has been in it but yourself and your husband ?"

" Nobody, Sir."

" So I supposed : you may go upstairs again to Robin, and we will speak further with you by and by." Madge curtsied and withdrew, when her interrogator, turning to Middleton, demanded with a look of triumph, " Well, Sir, what say you now ? If we can establish the presence of poison, of which I have little doubt,

will you not admit that we have already discovered strong grounds of suspicion against the wife?"

"It is for you to decide whether poor Robin has or has not swallowed any deleterious substance; but as to Madge, I will stake my existence, were appearances ten times more strongly against her, that she is innocent. It is quite monstrous to imagine her capable of such an enormity. She never quarrelled with him — she had no motives for such an atrocious attempt."

"Into motives we cannot penetrate; but we can judge of facts. If you have no objection, I should like to look about me a little in the kitchen."

"I will accompany you," said Middleton; "for on the poor woman's account, not less than my own, I am anxious that the affair should be thoroughly sifted."

"Ay, ay," cried the apothecary, as he ferreted into every hole and corner of the kitchen, with the alacrity and suspicious instinct of a thief-taker, for which office nature seemed to

have intended him. "Ay, ay—here are the tea-things all washed and put away sure enough, and not a scrap of the cake left in the larder or the cupboard; a cunning jade! a cunning jade! but we shall have her yet, and bring the fact home to her, by discovering where she bought the poison."

"You will first, I hope, ascertain whether any has been administered, which I confess myself strongly inclined to doubt."

"Well, Sir, we shall see, we shall see," cried the apothecary, who, as he continued his perquisitions, had now taken off the lid of the kettle, and was examining the inside with the aid of a candle, when he exclaimed triumphantly, "Eureka! it is found! it is found! I thought I could not be mistaken in the symptoms. The wife was quite right to find the water smoky. Look here, Sir, look here! See you this white sediment at the bottom of the kettle, and these concretions at the side?" *EUGENIA*

"I do, but I am not aware that they are of a deleterious nature."

"That we will determine presently;" so

saying, he took up a minute portion with a spoon, applied it to his tongue, and instantly spitting it out again, exclaimed, "Arsenic arsenic! I suspected as much from certain appearances upstairs, and now stake my professional reputation upon the fact. I can swear to it by the taste, but we have plenty of other tests. Have you a crucible ready? You are aware, Sir, of course, that the crystalline arsenic gives a whiteness to metals in fusion and that a single grain will turn a pound of copper into a seeming silver that is not me-

" You said just now that we could not penetrate into motives, though we could judge of facts."

" I say so still—and how stand the facts? Here is a man poisoned, for whose life I will not even now be answerable, though the sudden and violent sickness produced by the tea, and the alexiphamic remedies I have since applied, may perhaps save him: here is a kettle encrusted in several places with arsenic; and here is a wife who declines tasting any of this fatal beverage, under pretext that the water is smoky, while she confesses that no person has entered the kitchen during the whole afternoon, but herself and her husband, *alias*, her intended victim. For her own sake, if she is innocent—for yours whether she be so or not, she ought to be taken into immediate custody; but we have no magistrate's warrant, and at this time of night it will not be easy to procure one. Ah! what a pity that your friend and neighbour, Mr. Hargrave, should have declined the honour, when he was lately requested to become a magistrate."

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gated penalty of six mont
two public whippings, b
offence?"

"Well, Sir, well, you k
very strange. but this is no

to my servant upon such inconclusive evidence. You shall see me lock up this kettle ; when I retire to bed I will take with me the key of the porch-door, so that no inmate can escape ; in the morning we will examine Robin, who is not now in a state to be interrogated, and we will then decide what further measures should be adopted."

"I will be with you early for that purpose."

"Do so, and in the mean time, as I shall sit up with Robin, I shall be glad to have instructions as to his treatment, should his sufferings return, which you say is not unlikely."

Upon this point the practitioner gave full directions, and then took his leave, declaring, according to professional rule, that he had several other patients to visit, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour.

Not less surprised than distressed at this mysterious occurrence, although he fully exculpated Madge, and felt convinced that it must have originated in some unaccountable accident, Middleton returned to the attic, where he found Robin again complaining of pain and

sickness had nearly left his sufferings, the patient feverish and perturbed : desiring Madge to call band require assistance, locked and secured the and then, retiring to his r the bed without undress time given to a variety of sunk to repose.

Awaking with the fire ascended the stairs, when tion of learning from Ma enjoyed a deep and quiet or three hours, and seen easy. He desired her no moment, and as he had :

eager to draw from his patient some support to his own uncharitable suspicions of the wife, than to ascertain how he had sped during the night, and what had been the effect of the remedies he had taken. For form's sake, however, he made the proper inquiries as to his health, and having pronounced that he was going on as well as possible, and was decidedly out of danger, he commenced his interrogatories after the following fashion. "And so, my friend, you were alone the whole afternoon of yesterday; nobody in the house but yourself and your wife, for your master dined out, I find."

"Yes, master dined with Mr. Hargrave, but I wasn't alone for all that."

"So we understand; you had your wife with you."

"No I hadn't, for she was busy a long time in the closet up-stairs, sorting out the pots for the preserves, and while she were there, an old, fibrous, idiomatical-looking Jew, with a long black beard, comes to the kitchen-door, and asks if there was any china to mend. Now the milk-jug was broken—I done it the night 'afore,

old green china, so I say
says I, but you must be q
To be sure he did look u
when I called him Moses.
have some boiling water,
in the kettle? It's sprin
tea, says I, that I be goin
presently. You're sure i
tea, says he; and he asked
two or three times over.
must have a drop of cold
and I went to the scullery;
I came back, I found he
the kettle, and put it on a
so that it wouldn't shut cl
he told me, to see that th

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his forehead with his hand, "a horrible suspicion flashes across my mind. My thoughts have been so completely engrossed by apprehensions for poor Robin, that I never once adverted to myself; yet, from the statement just heard, there can be no doubt that this diabolical attempt was levelled at me and not at him. Once already, as you are well aware, has my life been attempted by some unknown assassin; and it is manifest that this Jew is another miscreant who has been employed by the same party to effect my destruction."

"It is most fortunate," said the apothecary, "that Robin filled the teapot so immediately, and before the water was fully impregnated with the poison, or the consequences must have been fatal."

"Heart alive! have I been drinking pison that was meant for master? Well, I'm glad on't, that I be, for I must soon ha' withered and gone off any how, while he be just blooming and coming into blow like. O those auspicious Jews! I fear the best on 'em be but deciduous characters. But, doctor, if I have

ing in the next world, wil

“ No, nor in this eith
days, I hope, you will be

“ Lord love ye, doctor
about 'afore three or fou
Mark Antony will have g
ledge, and become as r
young colts on a common.

“ I have one consolation
arousing himself from a
which he had sunk, “ no
attach to any part of my
deed I never harboured !
This villainous Jew has be
or at least the sole agent o

“ Ay, and we must
pursued,” cried the apoth

mours of the overnight's occurrence, now hurried into the parlour to inquire the particulars, and to offer such assistance as might be in his power. It was his strenuous advice, after having been apprised of Robin's statement, that Middleton should immediately request the attendance of a magistrate, not only that he might receive a description of the offender, and take measures for his apprehension, but that he might attest the deposition of the patient. Should a relapse, or any unfavourable change occur, it would be impossible for him, perhaps, to repeat what he had stated, to furnish any further particulars, and above all to identify the culprit, in the event of his being arrested. Nobody else had seen him, for he had stolen into the house in the dusk of the evening, probably through the plantations, and must have escaped in the same way, since none of the villagers had noticed him.

The whole place was now in an uproar; the atrocious attempt upon the life of their benefactor having transpired, men, women, and children, neglecting all their respective labours,

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exposed to a violent and cruel death ; but it is still worse to know that, without conscious offence to a breathing being, I have a foe, unknown, invisible, merciless, who is perhaps dogging my footsteps, like an armed shadow, whithersoever I go, and at this very moment may be levelling his blunderbuss from behind yonder hedge. Who is he ? what is he ? where is he ? Could I see my danger, I feel that I could confront it manfully ; but this blindness, this suspense, this misgiving of every fellow-creature who approaches me, weighs down my spirit with a sadness that will not be shaken off. O Christiana ! eloquent, argumentative, but alas ! too sanguine Christiana ! how can I reconcile your lofty and ennobling notions of human nature with my own heart-withering experience of its deceitfulness, its groundless animosity, its abandonment to utter and hopeless reprobation ? ”

Mr. Philpotts, the magistrate, a man of low birth, and the founder of his own ample fortune, had considered himself as one of the people, and had cherished liberal opinions, until

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the object of his attendance, promising, when he had learnt it, to drive over to Brookshaw, as soon as he had dismissed "the low fellows who were then pestering him." Meanwhile he referred to his clerk for any official measures that might be necessary touching the warrant and the orders to the constables and headboroughs.

Most persons are jealous of the observances due to their station, in proportion to their want of real dignity. This was eminently the case with Mr. Philpotts, who imagined himself to be doubly maintaining his authority when he exacted homage from others, and displayed arrogance in his own conduct. Several hours elapsed before his ponderous showy coach and flaunting liveries astounded the old women of Brookshaw, as he drove up to the Lodge, where he assumed as fussy and pompous a manner as if he were a despotic prince descending to visit one of his vassals. He took Robin's deposition, however, upon oath, not without some expressions of impatience at his grandiloquence and circumlocution; and then

adjourning to the parlour, vouchsafed to partake of a little collation provided for him; and even to pronounce that the Madeira was some of the very best, except his own, that he had ever tasted. "A shocking affair! a shocking affair indeed!" exclaimed the magistrate, re-filling his glass; "when persons of property and condition are to be poisoned in their own houses! but the fact is, Mr. Middleton, that the lower orders of this country are the most profligate, unprincipled, and abandoned set of miscreants upon the face of the earth."

"God forbid!" ejaculated his companion

tifying the inference that the great mass of our fellow-countrymen are worse than their continental neighbours."

"A great deal, sir, a great deal: I happen to know it in my magisterial capacity. The whole of the rapscallions and tatterdemalions that constitute the swinish multitude, as somebody has very properly called them, are thieves, rogues, and vagabonds; nay, sir, worse, worse—they are poachers.

"Even were they as depraved as you represent them, which I never can admit, the fault would not attach to them so much as to their rulers and teachers, their temporal and spiritual pastors and masters. Government and institutions are to a people what education and parental treatment are to an individual. In the best regulated household there may be a single scapegrace; but if in a numerous family all the children turn out incurable profligates, it *must* be the fault of their parents and instructors."

"A very extraordinary mode of arguing, sir, very! So, then, we of the upper orders are

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every night by a set of sc

“ You are to blame, I
to preserve, for the excl
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beasts of the field, whic
vidualised as the property
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those who, without trespa

“ What, Sir, have we
side ?”

“ There is no wrong,
manifest absurdity, which
or other, had the law on it
Laws, the worst and most
worst ages, are so monst
and so diametrically opp

Well, Sir, well; much good may it do you! But when you have got together, under your ten-pound franchise, a Parliament of cobblers and tinkers, to say nothing of rogues and vagabonds, I should be glad to know who is to fill your offices of trust, and honour, and dignity, for even *you*, Mr. Middleton, must allow that all our honest, upright, and respectable characters, all our men of high principle and unblemished reputation, are exclusively to be found in the rich and genteel classes, and among that illustrious order with which I have the honour to be connected."

"They ought to be so because they are the farthest removed from temptation, and might well be impeccable, from the mere luxury of virtue. Nevertheless I differ from you *toto caelo*, not only as to the general depravity of the humbler classes, but as to the immaculate character of those whom you are pleased to term their betters."

"Sir, I do not understand what you are aiming at."

"As a set-off to your low-born vulgar cri-

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but I thought that the laws of God and man denounced you as a murderer."

"Excuse me, Mr. Middleton; I cannot hear any more of such common-place radical rubbish. Call you this a case of murder?"

"Nay, Sir, I listened to your sweeping impeachment of all the lower orders, and do you wince when I retaliate upon a single individual of rank? Not a murder? Why, then, the decorated, 'Most Honourable,' who sits by his side shall supply me with one. My Lord Marquess! hold up your hand. Are you not the seducer of an unsuspecting girl who pined herself to death? Did you not win his last guinea of a brother collegian, who rushed from the hazard-table to blow his brains out? Are you, or are you not a murderer—ay, or no?"

"Ridiculous! inflammatory! libellous! contemptible! really, Mr. Middleton, this is worse than Cobbett's twopenny trash."

"Bear with me a little longer. I see yonder an Earl, a Viscount, and a Baron, with whom I would fain exchange a word. Right Honour-



trifles as do not expose their purloiners to a criminal process, or civil action."

" And what would you infer, Sir, from this Jacobinical philippic?"

" That if the upper classes, whom you deem so impeccable, do not often appear in our courts as violators of the written law, they are not seldom infringers of the moral and religious law; and that their exemption from the pains, penalties, and disgraces, that fall so heavily upon their inferiors, is less attributable to the presence of high principle than to the absence of temptation. Alas ! Mr. Philpotts, which of us can answer for our good conduct, had we been distressed, and had we ' exposed ourselves to feel what wretches feel ?' not I, for one. Let no man undervalue riches, which, though they may sometimes tempt us to excess, are often our sole preservatives from crime. Many of us, when we pique ourselves upon our honour and honesty, little think that we are paying a compliment to our three per cent. consols, or our landed estates, rather than to our sense of religious restraint or moral principle. Were

" Why, Sir, this has
ever been spouted at the
the Political Unions.
proving to our lower or

" Oh ! that I had it in
their lot ! But this causes
general change in our
We punish the crimes,
the misfortunes of the poor
we offer them not a sinecure
and good conduct ; our country
a hell for them, but doth
hopes anything that applies
heaven. Might we not
extinguish, and privileges
humbler classes as had

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the payment of taxes. He might carry a decoration, which it should be imperative upon our military sentinels to salute; while our gentry might honour themselves as well as him by invariably taking off their hats to him as he passed."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Philpotts contemptuously, "a pretty scheme truly! why, the very lowest of the rabble would scorn to wear any such badge, and if they did, it would not have the smallest influence upon their conduct."

"I am convinced of the contrary from what I witnessed at your own house this morning. You were expressing your surprise that one of the witnesses in the charge of assault and battery had conducted himself with so much forbearance. 'Why, your Worship,' said the man, 'I am an old soldier, you see; it was a holiday, and I wore my Waterloo medal, and, that being the case, I couldn't demean myself to behave like a common boxer or a blackguard.' From this single trait I should draw conclusions favourable to the scheme I have been recommending; and I believe it will be found that

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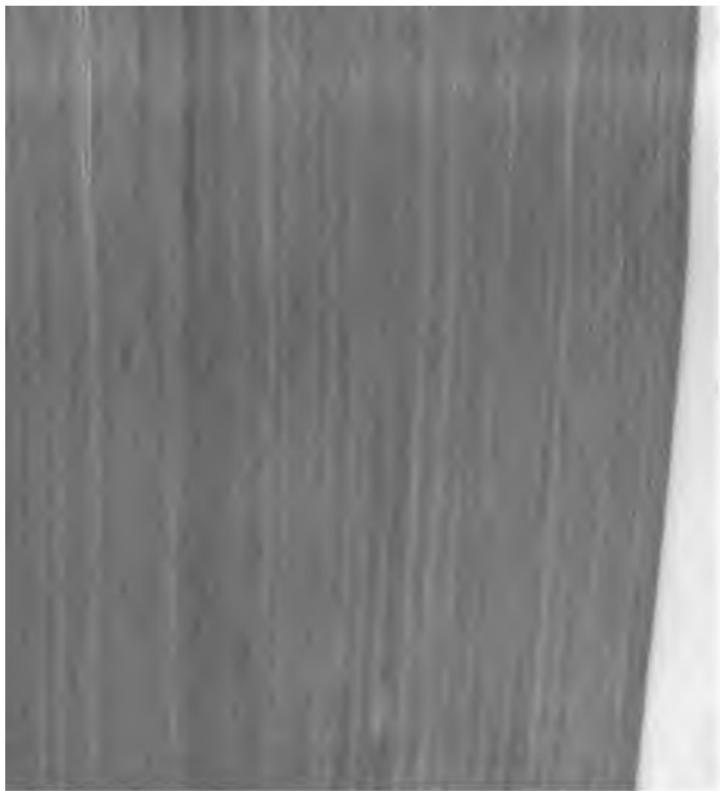
dleton ! it is too mild a term. The fellow is as mad as a March hare, and ten times more mischievous. No wonder some one has attempted to poison him, and little harm if he had succeeded!"

CHAP

Rise to my soule, brig
Make mee the vigour &
Dissolve the chilling fi
That makes mee lesse
I have gone wrong and
What can I else doe in
My foes strong are, and
Howres charged with c
sparke;
Yet, of thy goodness
My life shall be no l
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could gather no tidings of him, either in the highways or byways, at turnpikes, public-houses, or lonely farms ; a circumstance whence Hargrave drew the conclusion that he could not have wandered far, and must still be lurking in the immediate vicinity of Brookshaw. All were invited to take some refreshment at the Lodge, the modest larder of which being presently exhausted, as well as that of the contiguous parsonage, the guests betook themselves, nothing loth, to bread and cheese, lubricated by a copious supply of home-brewed ale. Middleton and Hargrave were not unassisted in doing the honours of this homely but hearty repast, for as there was a want of ministrants, owing to the absence of Robin and Madge, Lucy, whose beautiful and blooming looks might indeed have qualified her to enact the part of Hebe to the Gods, insisted on being cup-bearer to the rural guests. Her performance of this menial office would have somewhat abashed them, had she not discharged its duties with a laughing good-humour, or jocose gravity, that soon dispelled every feeling of restraint. Be-



Chritty. Oh ! you have no idea how clever she is in these matters, and indeed in every thing else. She can even mix up medicines for the poor, and I have heard many of them say that she has done them much more good than the apothecary."

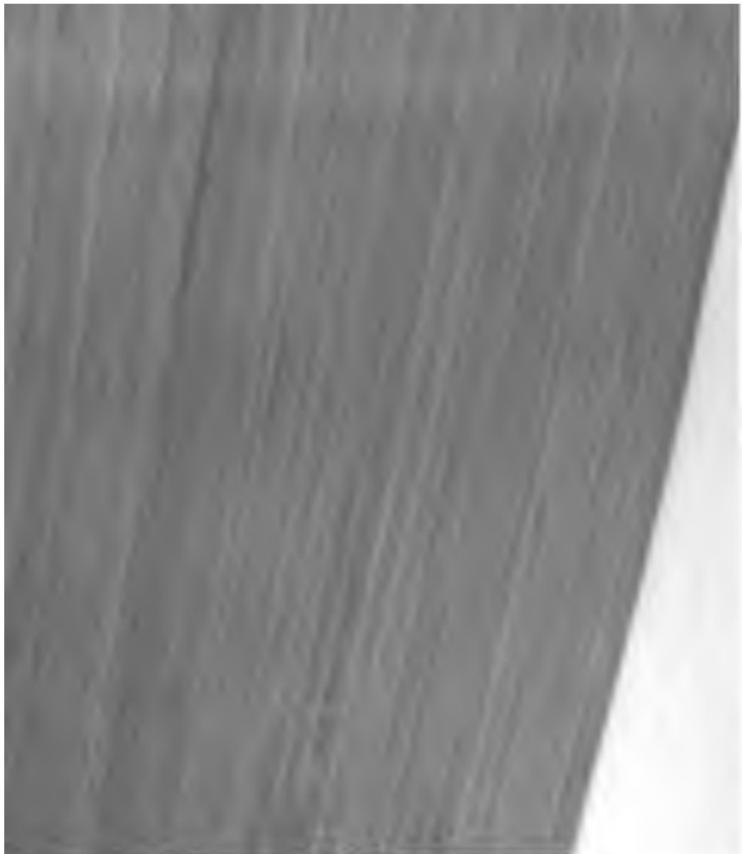
" I doubt it not ; so charming a practitioner might drive away, methinks, every malady that flesh is heir to. Christiana Norberry is an angel !"

" Lud ! I am glad to hear it. What, then, must I be; who am her sister ?"

" You are another angel," said Middleton smiling.

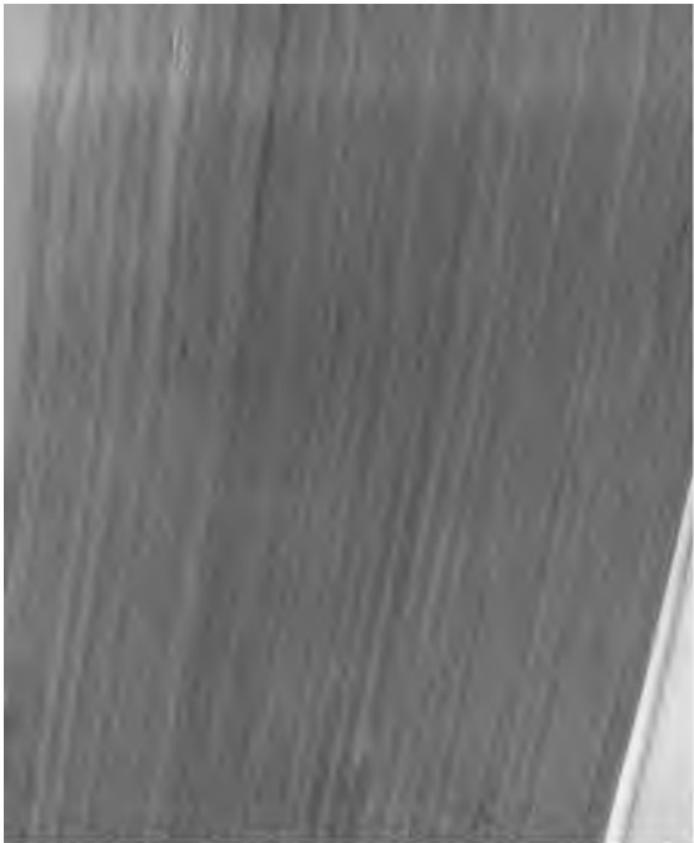
" You have had too much ale," cried Lucy, " you begin to see double. Begone, toper ! not a drop more shall you quaff to-day."

Before the peasants retired they would have made arrangements for renewing the pursuit on the following morning, but their hospitable host, apprising them that the constables were still out with orders for the apprehension of the offender, positively forbade their intended



thery branches of the birch and ash trees, until it became absorbed by the rougher surface and denser foliage of the oaks and elms. It was one of those soft, genial, gentle nights, that impress the mind with a sense of involuntary devotion, and even seem to impart the same feeling to inanimate nature. The rustling of the leaves, and the low indistinct murmurs ascending from the ground, sounded as if the earth, before it sunk to sleep, were whispering a prayer to heaven ; while it might have been thought, that the hushed impending heavens were listening graciously to the thanksgiving.

For some time the friends strolled forwards without speaking, for it seemed to both as if they were in one of Nature's sanctuaries, of which it would be almost profane to dispel the silence by the tones of a human voice. At length they reached a wilder and darker part of the grove, where the babbling of a runnel, hurrying from a pond above to the village rivulet, broke the illusion ; and, as they felt their way into an alcove, for in this spot the shades of night deepened into dark-



lately attempted your life ! I have already expressed my opinion, that, while we were seeking him at a distance, he was probably lying *perdu* in some of the contiguous woods : whoever this fellow may be, he cannot be lurking hereabouts with any good motive."

" Ha ! — say you so ?" cried Middleton, " then we will quickly put him to the test — anything is better than suspense." So saying, he sprang from the alcove, and precipitated himself among the bushes whence the sound had proceeded, scaring from his covert a man of middling stature, who rushed down one of the dark walks, with an evident terror that urged him to his utmost speed. Middleton, whose suspicions were fortified by this manifestation of guilty panic, followed instantly, and as the fugitive dashed across a moon-lit opening, was enabled to perceive that he was attired in black clothes, and wore the semblance, while he displayed the activity, of a young and vigorous man. His superior swiftness, and the increasing obscurity of the walk, soon carried him out of sight ; but his pursuer

tracked him for some distance by the sound of his feet, until he plunged into an umbrageous alley of turf, when this too failed him, and he followed with a blind impetuosity, utterly unguided by the ear or eye. Still animated with all the ardour of pursuit, and hurrying forward in unavailing chace from one alley to another, for he was familiar with them all, he again caught the sound of rapid footsteps, and, redoubling his speed, suddenly encountered a figure just at the point where two walks intersected each other. So violent was the shock with which he threw himself upon the presumed object of his search, that both came to the ground together, Middleton exclaiming, as he firmly grappled him, "Ha, fellow ! have I caught thee ?"

" You have indeed," replied the well-known voice of Hargrave, " but I will thank you not to throttle me nevertheless."

" Good Heavens !" ejaculated his friend, " is it you ? what a bitter disappointment. How has it happened ?"

" Knowing that you were unarmed, and fear-

ing that you might be rushing into danger, I left the alcove and ran after you as fast as I could; but you presently outstripped me, and I never caught sight of you again till we met with so little ceremony at this crossing, and you were good enough to knock out of my body the modicum of breath that the rapidity of my race had left me."

"Forgive me, my dear friend," said Middleton, helping him to rise, "I hope you are not hurt; but was ever anything so provoking? Have you seen the fugitive? Let us renew our pursuit. The rascal cannot be far off. Do you think he has quitted the plantation?"

"I have not yet recovered breath enough to answer all your questions at once; but to take them in order. I am not hurt, though somewhat shaken; it is very provoking; I have not seen the runaway; I do not think he can be far from us, and I have no objection to continue our pursuit. But as the rogue's cautious advance, and rapid flight show him to have had some evil purpose in view; as he may be armed and we are unprotected, I propose that we

should renew our search without separating. If it be the Jew, as I suspect, it would not be prudent to place yourself, singly, in his power."

"No, no, this is not our Israelite," said Middleton. "According to Robin's description that arch-felon was old and decrepit, and attired in a long drab great-coat; whereas the fellow of whom I caught a glimpse wore a short black coat, while his uncommon swiftness proved him to be young and active."

Nay then, if that be the case, I know not why we should trouble ourselves to pursue the knave. And yet his actions betray a guilty purpose; though not a principal in the late attempt he may be a confederate, and I confess that I should be glad to secure him. Shall we arouse some of the villagers, and get them to surround the plantation, while we beat the bushes on the inside?"

"Not for the world. The poor fellows have already been employed all day in a fruitless search, and I will not have them again disturbed. You yourself must be fatigued, nor am I in cue for a night-chase after a fellow who

runs like an antelope, and whom I am less anxious to catch, now that I am satisfied he is not the poisoner of whom we are in quest."

"But he may be his colleague, or some second assassin, nevertheless; nor am I so weary but that I can hunt for him a little longer. Come, let us try this dark walk to the left, for he will not take cover in the moonlight."

Without separating from each other, the friends renewed their search, but as it offered no prospect of success, and Middleton was apprehensive of exhausting his companion, who had been afoot for many hours, they shortly returned to their respective homes and retired to bed, both parties mortified at their failure, but neither of them sorry to forget in sleep the occurrences of an anxious and harassing day.

Early on the following morning, Middleton, having seen Robin, and ascertained that he was proceeding satisfactorily, retired to his parlour with a bible and the little treatise given to him by Chritty, in order that he might study and reflect upon it more deliberately than he had hitherto been enabled to do. So far as he

had advanced in its perusal, its effects upon his mind had been of a gratifying nature, exalting his opinion of the writer's talents, and awaking a deep sense of gratitude for the kindness of her intention, although her arguments and references had not yet converted him from his preconceived notions. After having finished the lecture of the paper, and certified the correctness of the several passages quoted from the Scriptures, he sate for nearly two hours in deep meditation, and found, for the first time, that the perilous doctrine which had so often agitated and distressed his mind, filling him occasionally with despairing terrors of final and inevitable reprobation, did not by any means appear so clear and irrefragable as he had been accustomed to deem it. Profoundly interested in following up the reflections thus suggested to his mind, he was hardly satisfied to have his meditations interrupted by visitants, even when he found that one of them was the fair writer of the essay, and the other his neighbour Hargrave. "We intrude upon you at an early hour," said the latter, "but you must blame

our friend Chritty if we disturb you unseasonably."

"Miss Norberry's visits cannot, I should think, be unseasonable to any one, and least of all to me," replied Middleton, looking at her with an affectionate smile.

"The fact is," said Chritty, "that I came over from Maple Hatch before breakfast, because I had tidings to communicate which would not brook delay. Soon after daylight this morning, for I was up unusually early, I saw at our garden-gate the poor woman whose nephew you saved from drowning in the mill-dam."

"Whom *you* saved, when *you* saved me," cried Middleton. "And now, before you proceed with your statement, you must allow me to declare that you have a second time preserved my life; for had I not been too much absorbed by your admirable essay to attend to anything else, I should doubtless have swallowed the poisoned tea. Oh, Miss Norberry—twice my preserver! I would fain express my gratitude, but—"

"Tush! you owe me none. If I have done

you service in either case it has been from momentary impulse or from mere accident, for neither of which can I claim the smallest merit, though I will not deny the profound gratification I feel at having been the means of preserving so valuable a life. Pry thee let me continue my deposition, for you are closely concerned in it. The poor woman to whom I referred, was the first to apprise me of the Jew's infamous attempt, of which she furnished such particulars as she had gleaned, adding, that she had wandered all night in the hopes of gathering some tidings of the miscreant, and having at length strolled into the copse that terminates the Hatch-lane, had discovered a bundle lying in a lonely ditch, and covered with rushes. On opening it, she found an old drab great-coat, and a long black beard, exactly answering Robin's description of those worn by the Jew; when, in the belief that she had at length obtained a clue to the malefactor, she brought her prize to Maple Hatch, in order to show it to me, and to ask my advice as to how she should act."

"This is singular indeed!" exclaimed Middleton; "after all, then, it is fair to surmise that the miscreant only assumed the semblance of a Jew. May I inquire, my fair preserver, what counsel you gave?"

"In the supposition that the felon might return for the trappings thus concealed, I advised her to replace the bundle where she had found it. My father and some of his neighbours, who have eagerly volunteered their services for this purpose, are now lying hidden in the copse, and if they are fortunate enough to seize the real or supposed offender, I have recommended that they should secure and bring him over here, together with the bundle, in order that the man or the clothes might be identified by Robin. If he can speak confidently to that point, we shall be provided with sufficient evidence, I suppose, to convict the criminal, and probably to discover the monster who so diabolically instigated him to seek your destruction."

"Oh, Christiana! allow me the privilege of using that beautiful and appropriate name—

you lay me under so many obligations at once, that I am utterly unable to express their amount, still less to repay it, even in thanks. Were it otherwise, I might attempt some sort of acknowledgment for that admirable paper, which has already shaken——”

“Hush!” interposed Chritty, “never let authors hear their own praises from your mouth. If my poor composition have wrought profitably upon your spirit, let its eulogy be seen in your amended and more healthy cheer of mind, which to me will be ten times more precious than all acknowledgments or rewards.”

“What are these clandestine proceedings to which you are alluding?” asked Hargrave with a smile—“Chritty Norberry! Chritty Norberry! if I find you tampering with one of my parishioners in spiritual matters!”—He held up his finger menacingly, as he added—“I have a great mind to punish you by not telling you how nearly we had arrested the poisoner, or at least some lurking criminal in the plantations behind the house; but as I know the intenseness of female curiosity, I will

not be so hard-hearted as to disappoint you." He then narrated the overnight's occurrence, taking credit to himself and his friend for the singular dexterity with which they had missed the object of their joint pursuit, and succeeded in catching each other.

"It is a melancholy reflection," said Middleton to Chritty, "that, as often as I endeavour to adopt the more gladsome and inspiring views of human nature which you are for ever urging, some untoward or sinister event is sure to blight the fair prospect opening upon me, involving it in gloom, and restoring my previous despondency."

"You are alluding to this fresh attempt upon your life," said Chritty, "which, considered by itself, is doubtless a revolting circumstance, and one that does little credit to our nature. But it is you who are now arguing from the exception instead of the rule, in taking a single misguided wretch as a fair sample of that noble creature, whom God has formed in his own image, and endowed with virtuous propensities and an immortal soul

Your life has been basely attempted ; this is a great crime, but it is a solitary one, and look how many virtues it has called forth ! see how it causes the fairer parts of our nature to shine out with all the brightness of contrast ! Is not the whole country up in arms to secure the assassin ? Contemplate the disinterested affection shown by the entire population of Brookshaw, many of whom, in spite of your prohibition, I met at an early hour, this morning, again wandering forth to renew their search. Consider the grateful, indefatigable perseverance of the poor woman who discovered the bundle, and who would willingly lay down her life for you. Forget not, though I only mention it in the way of further illustration, that my father and his neighbours are at this moment lying concealed among hedges and ditches, in the hope of detecting and securing your enemy ; and bear also in mind—”

“ No more, no more ! ” passionately exclaimed Middleton ; “ oh Christiana, I cannot bear these reproaches. I own it all—I see—I feel, I acknowledge the holiness and beauty

of human nature in its comprehensive view—I am an ungrateful creature, unworthy of the kindness and the blessings lavished upon me. Selfish and dissatisfied, I have sometimes exclaimed, what have I done to be pursued with the hatred of this unknown enemy? Alas! might I not much more reasonably ejaculate—what have I done to merit the regard and attachment, the generous, disinterested, the zealous, the devoted fidelity and friendship of this whole neighbourhood? Requital for so much sympathy and love, I can never, never, make; but my heart must perish ere it can forget to feel, and my lips must be cold ere they can cease to acknowledge, the kindness I have experienced. Dearest Christiana!—pardon me for calling you so—how have I deserved that you should twice have saved my life? that you should evince such an active interest in my welfare? that you should condescend to honour a moody hypochondriac like myself with your favourable notice? Hargrave, my pure-hearted, and noble-minded friend, how have I deserved of you, that you should so long have borne with

my gloom and my infirmities. Blessings have been showered upon me by God and man, and most ungrateful have I been to both. May Heaven have mercy on my errors! Christiana! Hargrave! will you be sponsors on behalf of your fellow-creatures, and forgive me for them and for yourselves? I throw myself on your mercy—oh, do not, do not reject a penitent brother!"

In the agitation of his feelings he seized a hand of each of his companions, and shook them with a tremulous nervousness, while the tears trickled down his cheeks. Chritty deeply affected, and animated with the pure delight of seeing a fellow-creature, whom she sincerely respected, awakening from the delusion that had so long preyed upon him, unconsciously returned the pressure of his hand, exclaiming—

"Most sincerely do I congratulate you on this incipient emancipation from the gloom that has so long oppressed and enthralled your noble mind, trusting that all its delusions will now be rapidly shaken off, never, never to resume their ascendancy. Think honourably of

your fellow-creatures, confide in the dignity of their nature and of your own, yield yourself to the holy and exalting belief, that man is destined to happiness and constant improvement in this world, and you will not be haunted with any of those horrific phantasms as to the next, which, even when entertained by the pious and the good, are but profane libels upon the justice and mercy of the Creator.

"Christiana has spoken in a manner worthy of herself and of her name," said Hargrave; "most cordially do I add my congratulations to her's, in the hope, as well as firm trust, that the light which has now begun to break in upon you is but the dawning of a spiritual and intellectual day, whose cheerful sun shall shine upon you without a cloud, so long as you remain among us. God bless you, my dear friend, and make you henceforward as happy as you deserve to be!"

"Thanks! thanks!" ejaculated Middleton, pressing the imprisoned hand to his lips and to his heart—"this is indeed a happy moment. I feel as if my mental regeneration had com-

menced : Heaven grant that it may continue and extend, and that I may never experience the horrors of a relapse !”

Some time was spent in mutual felicitations of the most cordial and endearing nature, when Chritty, who wished that the seeds of change which had been sown in the mind of Middleton, might ripen into mature conviction, under the influence of solitary meditation, made a signal to Hargrave, and drew him away. Enraptured with the soul-cheering prospects opened to him by her little essay, Middleton again betook himself to its perusal, studying and reflecting upon its contents, until, the film of error and delusion eventually falling from his eyes, he became a convinced and enthusiastic convert to her consolatory doctrine. So delicious were the sensations which penetrated his bosom, in the firm belief that the divine justice would be attempered by love and mercy, while the destiny of his fellow-creatures, hitherto so withering to his heart, now revealed itself to his mental vision in a glorious apocalypse of almost illimitable improvement, that for several days

he yielded himself up to an ecstatic reverie. If he wandered forth, the fields with which he had so long been conversant, seemed to have been suddenly sublimized into a paradisaical beauty, and the mortals that traversed them to be endued with an angelic purity.

"Clothing the palpable and the familiar,
With golden exhalations from the dawn,"

he invested every object with a celestial loveliness, and imagined himself to be wandering among Elysian bowers, enjoying a seraphic beatitude, and listening to the choral symphonies of saints and cherubim. We have elsewhere recorded that his naturally sanguine and happy temperament, blighted by the superstitious terrors instilled into him in early life, was apt to fluctuate from one extreme to another, though it was more frequently under the influence of despondency. It is needless to state that his present overwrought excitement was of too exalted a character to be enduring; but, instead of swinging back, as had formerly been the case, into a proportionate dejection,

he subsided gradually into a cheerful and complacent mood, the best sign of returning moral health, because it promised to be equable and permanent.

During this period, Hargrave and Lucy, convinced from his looks and manner of the beneficial regeneration he was undergoing, intruded upon him as little as possible, nor did Chritty, for the same reason, make her appearance at the Lodge. His friends, however, had not omitted to take all proper measures for discovering the pretended Jew, though hitherto their exertions had been unattended with success. By day and night had vigilant scouts been stationed in the copse, where the bundle was concealed, in the hope that its owner would come to reclaim it. Disappointed in this expectation, they at length took it up and conveyed it to Robin, now perfectly recovered from the effects of the poison, who immediately recognised the great-coat as that worn by the sham Israelite, a fact to which he could depose with perfect certainty, as he had noticed it to be patched in the arm with a different colour. Nor

did he entertain a doubt, that the long black beard was the identical appendage he had seen wagging over the broken milk-jug, though he would not undertake to swear to it. "Never stir!" cried the honest gardener, "but I do fancy I see the succulent multifarious fellow right afore me, as he was when he turned round the jug, and looked so uncommon emblematical afore ever he began to mend it. Well, well, all his evil doings will perspire one of these days, and he will be brought to everlasting shame in this world and superficial punishment in the next. Heart alive! I certainly did think that all my entrails was turned into pepper and mustard, and that I was agoing to ride to the other world upon a horse-radish, like; but I forgive the vagabond for his deciduous attempt, so far as I be concarned, though I never will pardon him for seeking to pison such a good, kind-hearted, adequate, and identical gentleman as master."

As the spiritual calenture that had accompanied the regenerating change in the mind of Middleton began to subside into a soberer de-

light, his first anxiety was to pour forth his fervent gratitude to Chritty for a conversion which her essay, her conversations, and her example, had been the chief instruments in effecting. Reproaching himself for not having sooner discharged this duty, he mounted his horse, and hastened over to Maple Hatch, where, on entering the garden, he saw Mr. Norberry and his daughter seated in an alcove on the summit of the slope, shaded by the two noble maple-trees, whence the cottage took its name. The taste of its present fair occupant was visible in the flowering plants that clustered over the roof, and the roses that enwreathed the wooden columns of this picturesque retreat, which she had set up and decorated for her father; though truth compels us to add, that she had done so for the very unromantic purpose of providing a fragrant and shady summer-house, in which he might enjoy the luxury of his evening pipe. The old gentleman, who really felt as much regard for Middleton as was consistent with his churlish nature, had willingly turned out to watch the

concealed bundle in the copse, in the hope of apprehending its felonious owner, but having caught nothing but a cold, and being one of those habitual grumblers, who delight to make the most of every little ailment, he had ever since enacted the invalid, reproaching himself with his folly, and testifying an additional moroseness towards his daughter, although she tended him with her usual affectionate sedulity.

—“Eugh!” he grunted, in answer to Middleton’s inquiries—“how am I? very bad, as such an old fool deserves to be; arn’t a slug, nor a frog, nor a tadpole, to go groping into damp ditches, and squat upon muddy banks, without catching the rheumatism. Sneezing too, like a cat in a gutter. Serves me right—little matter, I suppose, if I catch my death of cold—nobody cares for *me*.¹”

“Nay, my dear Sir,” said his daughter,—“I entreated you not to go out, and when you insisted upon accompanying your neighbours, I not only cautioned you about your health, but requested them to prevent your remaining abroad after sunset.”

"Requested *them*! what do they care for me; what does anybody care for me?—hoarse as a raven; scarcely see out of my eyes; rheumatic all over—Eugh!"

Expressing the deepest regret that he should have been the unintentional cause of his indisposition, Middleton tendered the warmest thanks for his good offices, although they had not been attended with success.

"Ay, much good your thanks will do me," was the reply—"won't take away my pains, nor take my medicine, will they? Time to take my draught now—nasty stuff! suppose I must go—eugh!"

"Allow me to accompany you," said his daughter rising.

"Shan't do any such thing—stay where you are—hate to have you always running after me like a dog." So saying, he buttoned up his coat, held a pocket-handkerchief to his mouth, and left the alcove, to the great delight of Middleton, who seized the first moment of his departure to announce to his companion the full conversion effected by the perusal of

her essay, and to pour forth the most impassioned thanks for the ineffable delight he had experienced since he had shaken off the nightmare by which his mind had been so long oppressed. With an angelic smile, Chritty declared her heart-felt joy at his deliverance from the thraldom of a soul-withering superstition, which was but an impious attempt to enshrine the capricious and revengeful passions of man in the person of a just, consistent, and benevolent Deity.—“But, beware,” she added, with a look of friendly admonition, “lest the cold fit should succeed to the hot one. Of such sudden conversions I am prone to doubt the permanency, especially where they act upon a susceptible mind, and agitate it with vehement oscillations, instead of fixing it in a stedfast, self-poised equilibrium. It would grieve me more than I can express, were I to see the progress of my pilgrim arrested, and to behold you sliding back into the slough of despond.”

“Of that I have no fear. My present convictions seem to be based upon an adamantine

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enlightened intellect. The realm of thought, that boundless and blessed region where the prisoner may expatriate without restraint, and the pauper revel in a golden Eldorado ; where the sick may find health, and the slave liberty ; is the entailed indefeasible patrimony of the whole human race. Freedom of thought, speech, and writing, within the limits of a proper decorum, is the birthright of all, without distinction ; and the Cain who first put a muzzle upon our mouths, and a padlock upon the press, should be held up to perpetual detestation, as the first murderer of the intellect, the first enslaver of the soul."

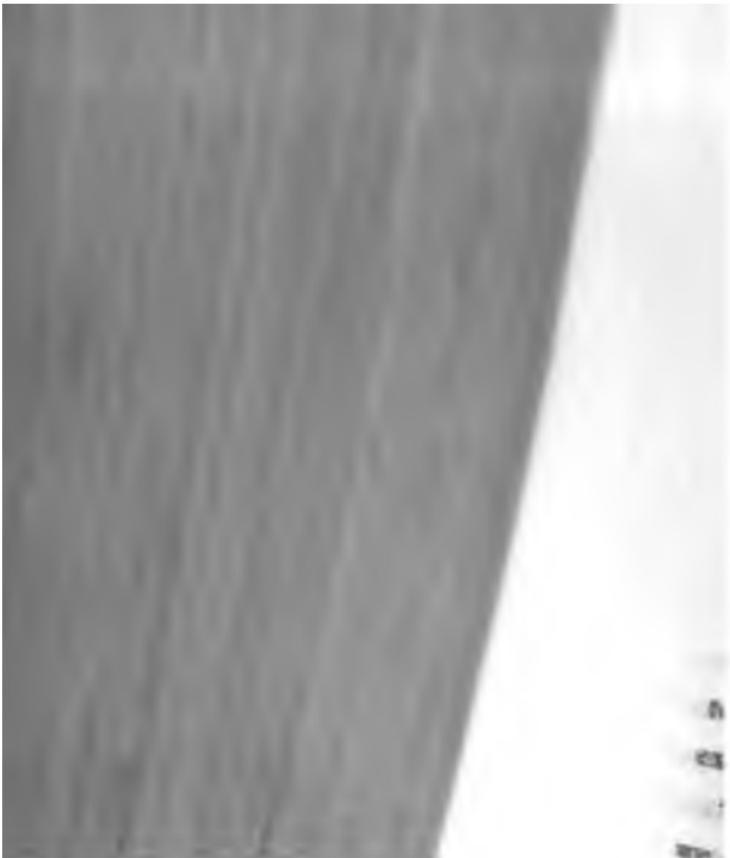
"And yet there are points upon which we submit very quietly to this mental vassalage."

"Yes—because we are apt to treat our opinions as mothers do their children—the weakest and the worst we love best. Attached as they are to political liberty, and personally the bravest people in the world, the English are such moral cowards, that, upon several subjects of inquiry, they will patiently suffer the weak intellects to intimidate and silence the strong

should imitate a man straightforward, looking heaven, and regardless may encounter upon earth virtual inquisition, which ing doubt and distrust up fesses to defend and establish an unlimited freedom of and solemn conviction, the more fully to penetrate, the more fully acknowledge the greatness, of our heavenly Father.”

Oh ! that I had possessed exclaimed Middleton, “slaving my young mind superstition, had emancip by such lofty doctrines as

with pleasure; for, had an angel been discoursing to me in this flowery arbour, I could scarcely have quitted it with more regret." So saying, he gave his arm to Christiana, and returned with her towards the house.



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always sure of possessing;* and not less unquestionable is it that we double our own felicity by sharing it with others. Benevolence towards our fellow-creatures is the most acceptable gratitude we can evince towards God; and the prayer most sure of finding its way to heaven is, perhaps, that which is offered up for us by the lips of others."

In accordance with this feeling, he enlarged the sphere and increased the activity of his charities. On his first arrival at Brookshaw, he had founded a school, which, it is hardly necessary to add, was open to all without distinction of creed; for he held it not less unchristian to exclude a child from the benefits of education because its parents were Dissenters, than it would be to shut the doors of a public hospital against every patient who did not profess a particular doctrine. Considering it of more importance to cure ignorance, the disease of the mind, than any bodily ailment, and deeming the claim for education on the part of the poor the most

* "Solas, quas dederis, semper habebis opes."

clusions either with the Samaritan, the special is to all men, or the all-constitutes the very spirituality. In connection we established a village library books only calculated to judices or instil some with such works as contamination with sound more religious views.

“ This is not enough, friend and active coadjutor have taught every one to read, and we have books and newspapers, as means and the impolitic

of the newspaper, for which purpose they have no place of rendezvous but the tap-room, where example, sympathy, and the necessity of moistening their arguments, should they happen to be dry, sometimes lead to excesses which they themselves are the first to deplore when they discover the shrunk state of their finances on the following morning. To prevent this evil, I would have a reading or club-room appended to our little library, where the subscribers might meet two or three nights in the week, and settle the affairs of the village, or of the nation, if they think proper, over such moderate and inflexibly restricted potations as might be agreed upon among themselves. By these means, in conjunction with the Temperance Society, to which many have already subscribed their names, we might wean them from the use of ardent spirits and the habitual haunting of the alehouse, without infringing upon that sociable conviviality and relaxation which they have quite as much right to enjoy as ourselves, and of which I should be the

educated ; many of the Bill, will be entitled chise ; all will take a c institutions of their co are thus politically ele we should endeavour t the moral scale, by allu possible from coarse an sities, and giving them fined and intellectual have hitherto been accus

Both friends being fu points, they set to work ment that soon produc incommensurate with th ployed ; so true is it good discretion will oft

paramount attraction was Maple Hatch, whither he now betook himself almost daily, seizing every opportunity to draw Chritty into conversations similar to that which we detailed in our last chapter, and never leaving her without a more exalted impression of her talents as well as of her virtues. On his return he rarely failed to pay a visit to the parsonage-house, where the manifest felicity which his friend enjoyed in the society of the sprightly Lucy strengthened his own unsuccessful but ineradicable love for Chritty, and made him sigh with a daily increasing ardour for the conjugal delights so congenial to his affectionate temperament and domestic habits.

Upon this subject a new and sweet hope, welcomed with an avidity proportioned to the transport it excited, began to steal into his heart. By that occult free-masonry which enables lovers to discover their mutual attachment, either through the silent eloquence of the eyes, or by some other equally inscrutable medium, he flattered himself that he was by

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making her a tender of his hand, grounding his importunity on the changes to which we have referred. Natural diffidence, the awkwardness of presenting himself a second time as a suitor, and the fear of disturbing an intercourse in which he found so keen a delight, and which he might be assured of retaining if he would consent to sink the lover in the friend, withheld him from again formally declaring himself, until an occurrence took place which completely satisfied him as to the state of Chritty's affections, and brought affairs to an issue much more rapidly than he had anticipated.

As he was about to leave the house one morning he received the following letter by the post :—

“ Infatuated man, once more beware ! Though you know it not, I have been watching your footsteps with the friendly intention of saving you from ruin. I find you have renewed your attentions to Miss Norberry, notwithstanding my former caution. Again do

Cambridge ; she is att
whom she has lately h
interviews. If you wil
tions, believe at least the
senses. Station yourself
of Maple Hatch, toward
will see her lover escap
the little china-closet, w
assignation. Seek not t
of this letter ; he is your
ever will be,

On the perusal of th
attack upon Christiana,
into an indignant and un
this second scrawl. thor

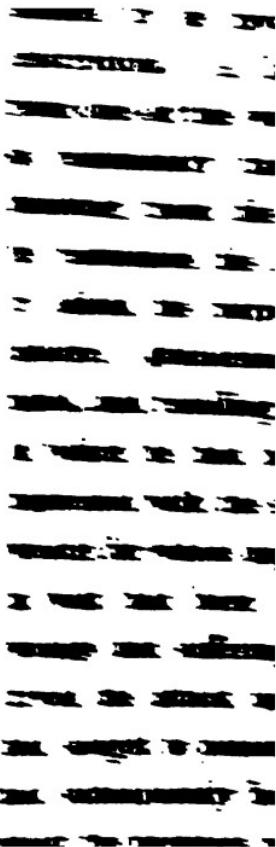
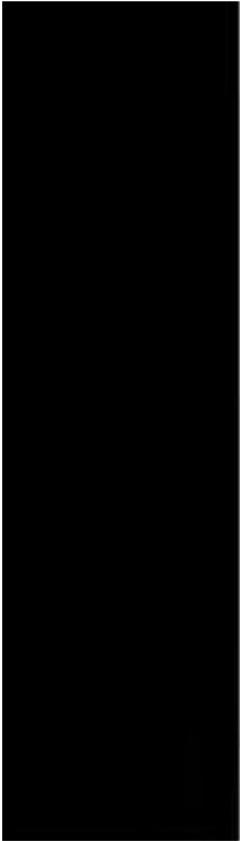
His faith in Chritty's truth and purity was too deeply rooted in his soul to be shaken even for an instant, and, however he might regret the confirmation that some secret villain was still conspiring both against her happiness and his own, he was not sorry that his charges had at length assumed a tangible shape, and that he had named the hour and the spot where, if he attempted to substantiate them, either by himself or his confederates, he might be detected, seized, and forced to confess the motives of his malignity. For this crisis and consummation Middleton had been longing with an intense curiosity, sharpened by a feeling of self-preservation; for, as he knew that some deadly enemy was plotting against his life, he was naturally anxious to free himself from a predicament which oppressed though it could not intimidate his heart. Hargrave had recommended him to go always armed, but this counsel he had rejected, observing that he had rather meet death at once, than die every day by living in the constant dread of it.

On comparing this letter with the previous

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lover he was, moreover, determined to have the sole merit of unmasking the villain who had dared to asperse his mistress, and of compelling him to retract his foul scandals, and confess the motives that had instigated him to their invention. He even rejoiced to think that the moment was at hand which, bringing his long concealed enemy to light, could scarcely pass over without leading to an *eclaircissement* equally necessary to the security and happiness of himself and Chritty.

With an impatience that only retarded the hours he wished to expedite, he awaited the arrival of night, when he set off for Maple Hatch. At the back of the cottage there was a small kitchen-garden, divided by a thick hedge from the Hatch-lane copse, in which had been discovered the bundle containing the disguise of the pretended Jew. Stealing as covertly as possible to the back of this hedge, he made his way through it, and stationed himself on the garden side, in such a way that, while he was effectually concealed, he could keep his eye upon the china-closet window, now faintly



which he was now seeking to substantiate, by assuming the character of her lover, and pretending to escape clandestinely from the house. To his own wrongs Middleton could have submitted with comparative patience ; but the indignities heaped upon Chritty irritated him into a mood of such ungovernable passion, that, in the impatience of a delay which now became intolerable, he was again about to start from his hiding-place in order to seek his adversary in the house, should he have stolen into it, when the china-closet window was cautiously raised, a man appeared at it, and rapidly, though without noise, let himself down to the ground. Scarcely had he touched it, when, uttering an exclamation of indignant rage, Middleton burst from the hedge to seize him ; but before he could effect his purpose, the fellow rushed across the garden, leaped over the hedge into the Hatch-lane, and ran swiftly along it. Maddened at the very thought of being again baffled, his pursuer followed with such energy that, after a race of about fifty yards, he overtook and threw himself upon

him, crying out, as he grappled him with a convulsive grasp, and even struck him in the agitation of the moment—" Ha, villain, have I caught thee? Surrender, confess!"

Without uttering a word, the miscreant disengaged his right arm, raised it in the air, and with a short dagger affixed to the end of a pistol, aimed a deadly blow at the heart of his assailant, whose life was not less singularly than fortunately preserved by the miniature he always carried in his bosom, which occasioned the point of the weapon to slide off, and only to inflict a trifling wound upon his shoulder. "Blood-thirsty ruffian!" cried Middleton, "will nothing but my life satisfy thy malignant hatred? Nay, then I must disarm and secure thee." As he spoke, he suddenly clutched the weapon, endeavouring to wrench it from his opponent's grasp; and a short but desperate struggle ensued, during which Middleton unconsciously pulled the trigger of the pistol while the muzzle was turned away from him. It went off with a sharp report, and his opponent fell instantly and heavily to the ground,

muttering hoarsely, "I am shot through the body—I am a dead man!—I am a dead man!"

The flash of the pistol had revealed to Middleton for a moment the face of his antagonist, whose features he could not recognise. He now glanced at them again; the paleness of death seemed to be upon them, and he started back, shuddering and thrilling through his whole frame at the thought that he was standing over the body of a fellow-creature slain by himself. Of shedding human blood, under whatever pretext, he had always cherished a peculiar horror, and the terrors of the deed he had perpetrated now flashed rapidly across his burning brain, as his eyes fell upon his own blood-stained hands, one of which grasped the fatal pistol, still reeking at the pan and muzzle. All his wrathful feelings had suddenly fled; compunction and remorse succeeded, not unmixed with hideous misgivings and affright, as he reflected (for his thoughts succeeded one another with a lightning velocity) that he might be deemed a murderer, since he himself had been the first aggressor, in pursuing, striking,

and collaring a stranger, whom he had no authority to apprehend, still less to destroy. The evidences of guilt were upon him; his hands were bloody—the murderous weapon was in his grasp—the victim, whom he had pursued under the shades of night into a lonesome copse, was lying dead at his foot! “Dead!” he ejaculated—“he may not be dead!—he may recover—perhaps he is only wounded!” As this new hope darted across his burning brain, he rushed back towards the cottage, shouting out, “Help! help!—a

sake, assist me to convey him to the cottage!
He may be dead before we can reach him!"

A neighbour of the name of Talford, who had been spending the evening with Mr. Norberry, was seated beside him at the moment of this alarming irruption. Both started from their chairs, utterly aghast at the looks and language of the figure before them, and so completely bewildered that neither could utter a syllable. Chritty, having hurried back into the parlour, was the first to find a tongue. "Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "what has happened? Who is shot? Ha! there is blood upon your hands! Are you hurt? are you wounded? Speak! speak! tell me, for God's sake, tell me!"

Surmounting, as she uttered these words, the natural repugnance of females to the handling of fire-arms and the touching of a blood-stained hand, she hastily detached the pistol from her lover's grasp, under the notion that it might still be fraught with danger to his safety, and threw it to the end of the room.

"Dearest Christiana!" cried Middleton, "I

hold. Oh ! let us try to s
not a moment to be lost
copse."

" We will bring him to
tage," said Chritty ; " but
posed : you are pale—dread
are ill : are you sure—qu
you are not hurt ?" Fixing
affectionate inquiry upon
denly uttered a piercing
hands together in an agonized
broken voice :—" O God !
—the blood is oozing from
see !—see !" Pale as ashes,
over, she averted her eyes
muring " Help ! help !" to
door, as if to seek assistance
could reach it, her limbs a

ere Middleton could reach her, sank with a deep sigh to the ground.

"Dearest Christiana!" cried the latter, as he gently raised her up, and, assisted by his companions, placed her upon the sofa; "it is nothing—nothing whatever. I was not even aware that I was wounded; it can only be a scratch!"

While Middleton thus hung over her, uttering the tenderest and most impassioned expressions, and filled with a heart-thrilling solicitude, that, for the moment, drove from his recollection the occurrence in the copse, Mr. Norberry, whose affection for his daughter, in spite of his churlish temper, always broke out upon emergencies like the present, pressed her repeatedly to his heart, alternately ejaculating her name, and assuring her, in hoarse, incoherent phrases, that there was no cause for alarm. Mr. Talford, the only one of the party who preserved his self-possession, threw open the window, held a salt-bottle to the sufferer, and suggested to Middleton, that he should wipe the stains from his hands, and button up

fair patient from her fair promise to be of long had these suggestions when the quivering of nounced that the faint she breathed pantingly, a eyes, said, in a faint, t am better—I am well— Mr. Middleton ! send, f surgeon !—a surgeon !”

“Indeed, indeed, dear scarcely touched—a me I have no blood about me the stranger. Ha ! I ha may bleed to death. Con not lose another moment ; him to the cottage.”

it. I saw the blood : I sicken at the remembrance. You shall not quit the house till your wound has been examined :—now, I will send you fast till you promise me this."

"Dearest Christiana! I will, I will : but your fears are groundless. My friends will you be my surgeons? I entreat, I implore you, not to lose a moment, or the wretch whom I left in the copse may expire before we reach him."

"Father! Mr. Talford?" said Christy, in a solemn voice, "I hold you both responsible for the safety of our friend, and I charge you to tell me the whole truth at your return."

"We shall be back in three minutes," said Middleton, hastening into the adjoining chamber, where his companions, on examining his shoulder, found the wound to be so trifling, that it was easily stanch'd with the hasty bandage of a handkerchief. His amended looks, for the colour had now returned to his cheeks, gave assurance to Christy, when he rejoined her, that he had not sustained any serious injury, and she consented to his leaving

—in my case." The letter
had escaped involuntarily
a slight blush suffused in
her face, pressing the
heart, passionately ejaculated
your dear wife I swear I
hurried from the room, so
and his friend Talford.

The letter had taken the
wife a lantern, which a
Mr Norberry, neither of
sighted as their young com-
with him, though he advised
"We must be now app-
said Middleton, whose eye
more absorbed by his son
here is the oak, under the

the earth, nothing whatever was to be seen. The presumed victim had made his escape; nor, upon holding the lantern close to the ground, could any traces of blood be discovered. A heavy load seemed to be taken from the heart of Middleton, who turned his looks towards the sky, and fervently ejaculated, "Thank Heaven! I am not a murderer! The fellow may have been stunned or frightened, but had he been badly or even slightly wounded, he could not so soon have made his escape, without leaving a spot of blood in any direction. That with which my hands were stained, must have proceeded, then, from my own trifling wound. Thank Heaven! thank Heaven!"

"I can distinguish the fellow's footmark," said Mr. Norberry; "it is shorter than yours; we may perhaps be able to track him; see! he has evidently gone down the lane towards the common; let us dog his heels!" With the assistance of the lantern they pursued the clue thus offered to them. By the distances of the footmarks it was manifest the fellow had

especially as no blood.
In this manner they tra-
common, where he appe-
the grass and the furze,
prints were no longer to
necessary to abandon th
indeed, would still have
although the night was
the extensive common
gorse bushes; but Mr.
with his usual grunting
ground was swampy, th
recommended their imm
cottage. This advice b
Talford, who reminded t
of his promise to take
dleton yielded, though

renewing her eager and affectionate inquiries as to her lover's wound. He declared that it did not occasion him the smallest inconvenience, and, taking her hand, which he tenderly pressed, while he whispered the most impassioned acknowledgments of the warm and gratifying sympathy she had displayed, accompanied her back to the parlour.

It was well for Chritty, whose blushes and confusion might otherwise have been noticed, that the attention of her friends was entirely directed towards Middleton, whom they beset with inquiries as to the cause and circumstances of his encounter with the stranger, requisitions which he could not well parry, and yet hardly knew how to answer without producing the anonymous letter that made allusion to his attachment, and contained such foul aspersions upon the integrity of his mistress. This he could not well do, either in her presence or in that of Mr. Talford, with whom he had but slight acquaintance. That he might gain time for deliberation, he pleaded, therefore, great exhaustion in consequence of the exertions he

had made, asked permission to sleep at the cottage, and promised to satisfy their curiosity on the following morning. "That's the least you can do," said Mr. Talford, "and you are bound to furnish us a romantic tale in recompense for the one you have marred and interrupted. Miss Norberry, who had been reading to us the whole evening, had just arrived at the most interesting crisis of a powerfully written novel, when your startling irruption broke the thread of our story, and substituted reality for romance."

With these words the visitant took his de-

to the imagination of such readers as have known the tender anxieties of love, while no description could render them intelligible to those at whom the blind archer has never shot a shaft.

CHAPTER VIII.

At first heard solemn o'er the verge of heaven,
The tempest growls ; but, as it nearer comes,
And rolls its awful burden on the wind,
The lightnings flash a larger curve, and more
The noise astounds—

Guilt hears, appall'd with deeply-troubled thought.

THOMSON.

ON the following morning, he had scarcely descended the stairs, when Mr. Norberry and his daughter eagerly called for the redemption of his pledge. "I am prepared to satisfy your curiosity," said Middleton; "but previously to my doing so, allow me, Christiana, to explain a circumstance which, on a former occasion, you would not permit me to elucidate, but to which you will now, perhaps, listen

with more interest, since I am indebted to it for the preservation of my life. A religious feeling induced me, when a student at Cambridge, to purchase a beautiful miniature of our Saviour, after a painting of Carlo Dolci, which I constantly wore in my bosom, imagining, that by having that monitor ever pressing upon my heart, I might be more pointedly and unremittingly urged to the fulfilment of his divine precepts, and thus secure a mediator against the perpetual reprobation to which I have sometimes conceived myself to be doomed. Accident having disclosed this fact to some of my brother collegians, they persecuted me with taunts and ridicule, which, though they could not wean me from my purpose, impelled me, both then and subsequently, to keep it as secret as possible, lest it might be thought that I was affecting a superior degree of sanctity. From hypocritical pretensions of this or any other nature I trust that I am free; and I only mention the affair now, in order that I may clear up a former occurrence, of which you were an unexpected witness, and account for

my preservation from the dagger of the assassin who attacked me last night." With these words, he detached the miniature from his bosom, and put it into the hands of Chritty, by whom its exquisite beauty was much admired, though her father declared, that its greatest merit was the thickness of the ivory, which had enabled it to resist so deadly a thrust from a small, but very formidable, weapon. In illustration of his averment, he drew from the table-drawer the pistol, which was provided with a three-edged spring-bayonet,

of the finest steel. Chritty turned pale, and

my fellow-creatures to the utmost extent of my ability!" So saying, he pressed the miniature reverently to his heart, and again secured it by the ribbon from which he had detached it.

After a short delay, occasioned by waiting for the arrival of Mr. Talford, from whom his friends wished nothing to be concealed, Middleton produced the letter, and, stating the grounds of his belief that the villain who had written or dictated it was the same who had more than once practised against his life, explained the motives by which he had been prompted to seize him, if possible, and force him to a confession, adding, as he concluded his narrative, that, so far as the dim light enabled him to see his features, the caitiff seemed to be a perfect stranger. Not less various than vehement were the emotions of his auditors, as they listened to this strange narrative. Chritty, whose conscious innocence made her treat with a proud disdain the scandalous imputations levelled against herself, blushed, nevertheless, at the recollection that she had completely betrayed, by her conduct on the previous night,

seemed to have merge
that it was possible for
enemy,—an apparent
clared himself unable
dleton exclaimed :—“
against me, was this in
Nothing but the frier
honours me has occasion
in the diabolical machin
though Heaven knows
piness and my life. To
who knew Christiana c
to imagine a moral impo

“ How, then,” asked
secret pleasure at this p
bounded confidence ; “
you yourself are pursue

who disturbed us all last night must have been lying *perdu* in the china-closet while Christy, little thinking what sort of a visitant we had got, was reading a novel to us. We should examine this closet, not only to ascertain how he stole into it—for the window is some distance from the ground—but to see whether he have left any traces that may lead to his discovery."

On proceeding to execute this purpose, they found that the window had been forced open, and that a short ladder, affixed to the wall, had facilitated the ascent of the intruder: but there were no other indications that might afford a clue to his detection. "We have secured the fellow's pistol at all events," said Talford, "and I should like to inspect it. Many such miscreants have been hung upon circumstantial evidence, and though this weapon, unfortunately, missed its owner in the first instance, it may, possibly, occasion his death after all. It is quite new," he continued, after the pistol had been placed in his hands; "I doubt whether it has been fired off more

long to any vulgar male
address, engraven unde
he resides in London :
morrow, and, if you v
inquiries as may not in
important result ; for if
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perhaps, obtain from h
his person."

This offer was grat
Mr. Talford, alleging
tions to make for his jo
and the conversation,
recent strange occurren
the remainder of the p
occasions," said Middle
to Chritty, "you have

frightful to think that our character and our happiness may be destroyed by any individual slanderer who is base enough to assail them? Suppose, for instance, that, from an unfortunate combination of circumstances, the foul calumnies directed against yourself had found credence with the world, what would have been left to you?"

"God and my conscience!" said Chritty, laying her hand upon the table with the proud dignity of virtue. "Being innocent, I should still deem unhappiness an ingratitude to Heaven, and I would appeal from the injustice of man to the loving kindness of nature, and to the religious consolations of which nothing could deprive me, until the light of truth, of whose ultimate prevalence none need despair, should dissipate the clouds that darkened my fair fame."

"O, Christiana! how I envy you that stedfast fortitude of mind, which empowers you, under all trials, to sustain your cheerful confidence in Heaven and in yourself!"

"Why should you not imitate, rather than

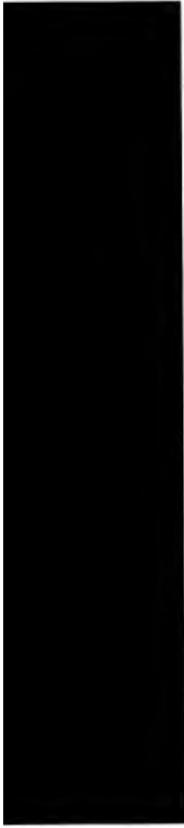
envy me? If you doubt the power, let me remind you, in the fine language of Wordsworth, that—

‘ ‘Tis Nature’s privilege
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy, for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Shall e’er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.’ ’

“ This inspiriting and delightful creed I find it not difficult to hold when I am in your

courage to make, with every prospect of success, was prevented by the unwelcome presence of Mr. Norberry, who teased him with trifling inquiries about the last night's occurrence. Never had he felt his company so irksome, and never had he given so many and such broad hints that his absence would be acceptable; but the old gentleman, as if on purpose to annoy him, maintained his ground, until Middleton took his leave in despair and returned to the Lodge, resolving to come over again on the following day, in the hope of obtaining a *tête-à-tête* with Chritty and of executing his long-cherished purpose.

So little, however, can we answer for our own resolutions, that a night's reflection determined him to defer this proceeding for an indefinite period. It occurred to him, that, while he remained exposed to the secret machinations of some assassin, or perhaps a band of villains, who were conspiring against his life, and lurking in his immediate neighbourhood, it would be the very height of selfishness to implicate in his fate one whom he loved far better than



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prove whether these expec
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compromise Chritty's safety
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that the parties employed, though sanguine in the first instance, had been completely baffled, and at length had abandoned their search. These letters were regularly shown to Chritty, with whom Middleton had almost daily interviews, increasing the intensity of his own passion, and confirming his impression that it was fully reciprocated, although the very depth of his love, and the tender fears that it elicited, made him withhold any fresh and formal declaration of it.

On the day that he received the last letter from London, which happened to be the Sabbath, he was attending afternoon service in the church at Brookshaw, when the heavens were suddenly and deeply overcast, and a furious storm, involving the whole neighbourhood in unusual darkness, burst immediately over the village. For some time it was limited to a heavy rain, broken by violent gusts of wind that howled menacingly around the pile, occasionally plashing sheets of water against the windows, or wrestling with the old trees in the church-yard, which

writhed and groaned as if they were about to be torn up by the roots. Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning irradiated the building—the tattered hatchments rattled in the rushing wind—an apparently deeper gloom succeeded to the momentary blaze, and a deafening peal of thunder shook the whole sacred edifice. Mr. Hargrave, who was preaching at the instant, remained silent until his voice could again become audible, when he made an extemporaneous allusion to the awful terrors of the passing tempest, in order to enforce the necessity of being always prepared for death, exclaiming with a solemn energy of look and tone—

“ Oh, my brethren! if there be one among us who still locketh up in his bosom an undivulged crime—one impenitent who hath never implored forgiveness of his sins—one evil doer who hath wronged his fellow-creature, and hath never made atonement or confession—now let him tremble, now let him resolve to flee from the wrath to come!—now, now, ere it be too late, let him reconcile him-

self to God and man. At all times we are surrounded with death ; but at a moment like this we stand more especially in the immediate presence of the king of terrors. There is yet time to enter into a solemn covenant with Heaven, to make a soul-binding vow of repentance and expiation, in order that, if we are doomed to instant death, we may at least expire with a prayer upon our lips and a pious resolution in our heart. And what sinner can be assured that his life shall be spared even for another moment ? Now, even now, may the right hand of a justly-offended God be stretched forth to smite him !—the dread thunder may be pronouncing his sentence of condemnation, and the lightning, the fire-winged minister of Divine wrath, may at the same instant be commissioned to strike him dead, even in the temple of the Lord !”

As he concluded these words, a blinding flash of lightning smote the great window of the church, which it shivered to atoms ; and an almost simultaneous thunder-clap, stun-

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who fell heavily upon the
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and, calling upon three or
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ed their assistance in hearing

in such cases, and who fortunately possessed sufficient surgical skill for the purpose, opened a vein in his arm with a penknife, conjecturing, as there was no mark of external injury from the lightning, that the man had been seized with a fit brought on by terror. The blood flowed freely, and, as Middleton stood over his patient, compassionately watching his countenance to catch the first signs of returning animation, he observed with surprise that he wore a flaxen wig, which having been displaced while they were conveying him to the house, revealed a shock of black hair beneath it. On opening his coarse smock-frock for the purpose of giving him air, his under-garments were found to be of a quality very superior to his apparent condition, and a diamond pin sparkled in the bosom of his shirt. His curiosity being excited by these appearances, he examined the man's features with some attention, and felt confident that he had seen him before, though he could not tell when or where. While he was pursuing this scrutiny, the patient ut-

tered two or three deep-drawn sobs, shuddered convulsively all over, and then murmured in a hoarse whisper—

“The judgment of God! the judgment of God! I am smitten for my sins. Is there no time for repentance? Oh! mercy, mercy!”

The shuddering returned; his head, which had been partially raised, though he had never unclosed his eyes, fell back, and he relapsed into insensibility.

After a brief interval, his lips were again perceived to move, and he ejaculated, in so faint a voice as to be scarcely audible—

“Where is my darling boy—my dear Harry? Let me—let me kiss him before I die!”

Obtaining from these few words the clue that was wanting to his memory, Middleton now recognized in the figure before him the man whom he had last seen in the livery of a coachman, and whose strange agitation, when they had met, coupled with his instant flight from Brookshaw, had given rise to so many vain conjectures. Taking no notice

of this discovery, he immediately sent for the boy and his aunt, thinking their presence might console the patient, who was evidently labouring under great agony of mind. They shortly reached the Lodge ; when the child, breaking from his companion, burst into the parlour, exclaiming—

“ Father, dear father ! what has happened ? —what is the matter ? ”

At the sound of his son’s voice, the sick man drew himself suddenly up on the sofa, and, as his quivering eyes peered vacantly around the room, evidently without distinguishing a single object, Middleton now perceived that he had been blinded by the lightning.

“ The darkness of death is upon me ! ” groaned the wretched man, covering his convulsed eyes with his hands. “ I hear my boy’s voice close to me, but I cannot see him. Speak to me again, Harry.”

The child did so, at the same time kissing him, and shaking his hand, when the muscles of the father’s face began to work with an

“ Harry, my dar
boy ! my boy !”

As the vehemen
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“ Oh, Henry !
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having saved your
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and bled you with

more than I can bear. Am I in the house of Squire Middleton, and has he done all this for *me*?—for such a miscreant—such a villain—such a reprobate—such an ungrateful, hardened, damnable — ! Oh! hide me, hide me! Away ! away !—let him not see me —bear me away from his house quickly, instantly!—I would rather die anywhere than here.”

In concluding these words he made a vain effort to rise from the sofa, when Middleton said, in a soothing voice—

“ My good friend, why should you wish to quit my roof? You are not well enough to be moved. I have already sent for a surgeon; and while you remain in my house, I will attend to you as carefully as if you were my own brother.”

“ Oh, that voice! that voice! Those words of kindness,” groaned the man, as he struck his bosom in an agony of remorse, “ they make me shudder with horror—they will kill me outright! The surgeon, did you say? It is all useless—I am a dead man; but I have much

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be, I forgive them as freely as I myself look for forgiveness from Heaven."

"Bless you! God bless you! I do not deserve such generosity—I cannot believe it possible.—Will you swear not to recall your pardon after you have heard my confession?"

"I swear it;" said Middleton, giving his hand to the blind man as a pledge of his truth; "nay more, I promise to pray with you that you may obtain forgiveness from Heaven, should your sins be of a nature to require it."

"They are—they are! I fear that I have broken every commandment, except committing murder, and even that I have attempted; but if you can forgive me; if you can pray for me; you whom I have so cruelly wronged, I may yet hope for mercy from Heaven."

"Not only do I renew my pledge of pardon, but if your boy should be left fatherless, I promise to be a friend to him."

The blood suddenly rushed to the face of the wretched man, who strove eagerly to express the greatful feelings with which his heart was

been sunocated, had tears, and sobbed for Middleton, after this subsided, desired him to then demanded, "Who you wronged me?"

Another struggle of utterance to the sick subdued his organs to speak with rapidity, as if an extremely revolting subject as fast as "My name is Henry Clain who was employed in London; it was not you to the earth, but I who were to dispatch you into the grave, none had succeeded in our obi

in the person whom I had thus atrociously outraged, I discovered the preserver of my dear boy's life." A deep groan concluded this part of his confession, and his whole frame shuddered, as if his inmost soul were revolted at the statement of his own monstrous villainy.

"A new light flashes upon me," said Middleton, "and in spite of your disguise, methinks I now recognise the man who, when I was assaulted at Widow Allan's house, was addressed by his comrades as Gentleman Joe."

"I am that monster," groaned Clements, striking his forehead with his clenched fist.

"Monster indeed!" cried his interrogator, recoiling with involuntary horror. "What injury had I done you to justify so ruthless and deadly a hatred?"

"None—none—I knew you not—I had never seen you;—but I was in sharp distress—in danger; and a devil—a fiend in the likeness of a man, bribed me with gold to practise against your life."

"Gracious heavens! have I then another

through his closed teeth,
hands convulsively, as if
the words filled him with
tation.

"Impossible! utterly
shall persuade me to believ-
tion. Caleb Ball! He
friend. I never did him
Psha! your brain is be-
ness—you know not what

"There is indeed a
brain, as if the pangs of
but well, too well do I know
and I repeat my words,
Caleb Ball, who set me or-
dictated the letter about
who has since attempted t

still slowly moved, but without any articulate sound, and he fell back upon the sofa, utterly overcome by contending emotions, and the efforts he had made to tell his tale, shortly and imperfectly as he had been enabled to narrate it.

CHAPT

No ; man is dear to man
Long for some moments
When they can know and
Themselves the fathers and
Of some small blessings
As needed kindness, for
That we have all of us or

Certain it is, that whenever
mind is easily converted from

MIDDLETON was still
reflecting upon the strange

should be left perfectly undisturbed, as his present exhaustion would probably induce sleep, from which he would derive more benefit than from all the resources of art. This prediction was verified. He slept for several hours, and though, upon awaking, his ideas remained for some time perturbed and confused, his strength had evidently returned to him, and his bodily faculties had nearly recovered their pristine vigour. As his blindness, however, continued, he could not be persuaded that he was long to remain in a world from which he was thus shut out; the fear of immediate death was still strongly upon him: and, after enquiring with much tenderness for his boy and his sister, he addressed himself to Middleton, expressing an anxious desire to give a short account of his life, in order that he might explain more fully the origin of his connection with Caleb Ball, and the circumstances that had reduced him from a respectable station, to become the associate of thieves and murderers. In his compunctionous solicitude to make what atonement was yet possible, he desired that witnesses

might be present to hear his deposition, so that it might be rendered available, should death prevent him from completing his purpose of unmasking Caleb Ball, by personally confronting him, and proving his nefarious misdeeds Middleton suggested that the clergyman might attend, as he could remain and pray with him after he had finished his narration; the proposal was thankfully accepted, and Hargrave being presently seated by the bed-side, provided with pen and ink to note down the head of the confession, Clements, after many remorseful throes and fresh appeals for

dress, regularly followed the hunt, and thought more of being in at the death than of attending to the business of the farm. Towards the conclusion of the late war my father died, leaving me nothing but the remainder of his lease : at the end of a twelvemonth I married the handsome, but portionless daughter of a neighbouring farmer ; and shortly afterwards my troubles began, although I had now given up the hunt, abandoned my expensive habits, and applied myself to my farming concerns, in which I was assisted by a most industrious wife. My rent had been fixed during the war, when corn was at its highest rate ; prices had now fallen very considerably, a young family had increased my expenses, and, in spite of all my exertions, I could not help getting behind-hand with my landlord. Unfortunately, he was at this time amusing himself on the Continent, or he might perhaps have granted me some indulgence, for he was a kind-hearted man ; but his steward, far from showing me any mercy, turned me out at the expiration of my lease, seized my farming-stock for arrears.



not, to be fitted up with curtains and cushions for a rich family that had lately come into the neighbourhood, and we were told we might sit upon benches placed in the great aisle. Perhaps, gentlemen, it was a foolish pride, but I could not forget that I had once occupied a pew of my own, and I could not brook being thus treated. ‘What!’ I exclaimed, ‘are the rich to monopolise the next world as well as this? Will they not even allow a poor man to pray beneath the same roof with them, unless he be thrust into a remote corner, or stand in a public thoroughfare, like an outcast, branded with an ignominious pauperism?’ But for the entreaties of my wife I should altogether have discontinued going to church; and in fact I soon did so, owing to an occurrence that at once wounded my pride, which I had not yet learned to subdue; and irritated my temper which had always been passionate, though my disposition was kind and affectionate.

“The foot-path that led from the common to the church crossed the grounds and skirted the preserve of a neighbouring squire, who had

the game laws. This
of a brother magistr
shutting up the path,
the passengers someti
turbed his pheasants
main to the church,
added at least two mi
same in returning, wh
my wife, who was now
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proprietors procured a law for enclosing the common, which was carried into immediate execution, and I found myself once more a ruined man. Deprived of the free pasturage which had been enjoyed by the neighbouring poor from time immemorial, I was obliged to sell the whole of my live stock for what it would bring, while I could no longer derive emolument from cutting the furze, which had also been an uncontested privilege, perhaps for centuries. Had we been rich, we might have raised a clamour about vested rights, the sacred nature of property and prescription, and our just claims to indemnity : but we were obscure and poverty-stricken, and no one heeded our complaints. Even my garden was no longer remunerative, for the distance to the next town was so much increased by the new inclosures, that my time was wasted on the road till it was scarcely worth while to carry my produce to market. Had the common from which I formerly gained my support been appropriated to the production of food for others, I might have submitted to my privation with a

bouring squire, and th
in order that it might
for hares and foxes.
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“ My difficulties rap
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artisan may achieve fortune and distinction. I have seen enormous capitalists and leading men in the state, whose fathers were common weavers ; but the rural labourer has not even hope to cheer him ; he can never emerge, never break the chain of servitude, whatever may be his industry, his strength, or his talent. He sees nothing before him but incessant drudgery for a pittance that will scarcely keep life and soul together, the dismal prospect being wound up by the hardships of a poor-house, from which he can only be released by death.

"The shooting season had now come round ; the Squire had invited a party of sporting gentlemen, who had been amusing themselves from an early hour until sunset in the preserves, and as I strayed disconsolately homewards in the evening to my necessitous family, I reflected upon the strange laws which appropriated certain wild animals to the amusement of a privileged class, while the poor and the hungry, who had certainly as much natural right to them, and infinitely more need of them, were unrelentingly punished if they pre-

evening ; the poor crea-
to die in some hedge, w
it would never have bee-
of its misery by a blow
carrying it home to me.
the Squire's gamekeeper
instantly seized me as a
of this unlucky exploit
the county gaol for three
cisted with hardened an-
whom I was so effect-
when I left prison, at the
temer, I was little better

" My wife, who might
from the evil courses up-
ing, had expired during
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whose life you were the means of saving. All these losses only hardened my heart, particularly towards the Squire, whom I considered the author of my misfortunes, though I did not limit my feelings of enmity to a single individual. All mankind seemed to have declared war against me; I began to practise hostilities in return against all mankind, and, when by poaching and pilfering I had made the country too hot to hold me, I betook myself to London, where I joined some of my old gaol acquaintance, and soon became a regular and expert thief.

" You may think it strange, gentlemen, but, knowing that I was superior to my comrades by birth and education, I piqued myself upon being more gentlemanly in my appearance and demeanour, studying the fashions in my dress, and even affecting the foppery of rings and jewels; while, in the use of slang language, and in the vulgar profligacy of my life, I was scarcely to be distinguished from the lowest of my associates. A more excusable pride made me conceal my real name, and assume that of



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name, and it was not i
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real one."

"Nay," interposed
quite sure that you a
identity of my cousin."

" Whence he procured his money I know not, for at the gaming-table he was generally a loser; but for any sensual enjoyment or extravagant night-freak, his cash was ever ready and abundant; and as to his seeming attention to business, I have often assisted him at an early hour of the morning to rig himself out in his demure-looking city dress, and helped him into a hackney-coach, that he might arrive at the counting-house in time to take his station at the desk and gull old Hurlo-thrumbo, which was the appellation he generally bestowed upon his uncle Sir Matthew, when talking of him to his confidential friends."

" All this iniquity appears still incredible to me," said Middleton; " but proceed, proceed—I shall be the better enabled to judge when you have completed your narrative."

" Upon one occasion," resumed Clements, " I was in great distress for fifty guineas. I had been concerned in a capital felony; a knavish constable discovered me as I was retreating from the premises, and threatened to have me immediately apprehended, unless

least I had to fear
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future scrapes.' He

that we might expect a handsome booty besides, as he generally carried his pockets well lined with gold. Amidst all my misdeeds, I had never yet been concerned in bloodshed, and at first I recoiled, not without a shudder, from his horrid proposition; but he reminded me of the perilous predicament in which I was placed—maintained that self-preservation was the first law of nature—told me that it was better to inflict death than suffer it—spread out before me the fifty guineas, and finally conquered all my scruples. Ask me not the particulars of that dreadful transaction; I cannot bear even now to think of it; and do not, oh, do not recall the pardon you have so solemnly pronounced!—promise it to me again." Clements stretched out his hands in an agony of remorse; Middleton complied with his request, and then said—

" Supposing that you are not mistaken in the identity of Caleb Ball, and you admit that your tempter assumed a different name, what reason can you assign for his animosity against me, for his even seeking my life?"

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“ How came tha
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known.”

“ Most strange ! ”

tered you from offering a large reward; but to make all sure, we contrived to have my two confederates apprehended for some former misdemeanour, and they were shortly afterwards transported. To secure my secrecy, he gave me small sums of money from time to time, and fed me with promises of more. I was well paid for writing the letter about Miss Norberry: I was offered a round sum for copying out another, and a still larger one if I would attempt to poison you; but this happened after you had saved my dear boy's life, and I not only indignantly rejected his proposition, but threatened to bring him to public shame, if he did not forego his infamous practices against your life. In fact, we have both of us been living in a state of enmity and misery ever since, at least if I may judge by my own feelings; for as often as I had occasion for money I extorted it from him by menaces, and in return, he never failed to threaten that he would rid himself of my importunities by having me hung."

" Because he had I should do it; but met him, on the ver lurking about the pl of a Jew. He did no for when I ran dow little Harry, I left o lest you should mee wore a dark-coloured that he was about som threatened to expose nobody would believe as a respectable citizen —reminded me that n desired me to take we parted with mutu never seen him since."

“ Why, sir, I was frightened by his threats, when he told me, that the oath of a notorious thief would weigh nothing against that of a well-known merchant, connected with one of the first houses in the City, and that I should only be putting my own neck into the halter, if I attempted to throw a noose over his. God knows, my life was miserable enough ; but I was afraid to die, as well I might be, and so I am still ; and then I thought what would become of my poor boy, and my sister, if I were to be taken off or transported. In all my distresses, I never suffered them to want for any thing, though I ought not to boast of it ; for the money I sent them was never honestly gained : but 'tis hard, gentlemen, very hard, to see one's own flesh and blood, especially if they have known better days, asking bread of the parish. Oh ! my pride, my guilty pride ! it has been the ruin of me !”

Overcome by a fresh ebullition of tenderness and remorse, the wretched man clasped his hands together, burst into tears, raved incoherently about his boy, and then implored

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found, on awaking, that he had recovered his eye-sight, an occurrence which only filled him with fresh misgivings. During his blindness, he had made up his mind to die; but no sooner was he restored to the visible world, and to the consequent hopes of life, than the terrors of a public execution, and the indelible disgrace that would be entailed upon his boy, haunted his imagination with the most hideous phantasms. Middleton, having renewed his solemn assurance, that he would never proceed criminally against him, and that he would always be a friend to his boy, the wretched man once more recovered his self-possession, and on the following day declared himself well enough to proceed to London, for which place they accordingly took their departure, Hargrave, at the solicitation of his friend, consenting to accompany them.

CHA

Pov.—Is he not able to
Bass.—Yes, here I tend

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was feared. The unex-
ceived on reaching Ball

fore, and had gone to spend a week with his bride at Salt Hill. "This man cannot be guilty," he ejaculated; "impossible! impossible! If he were leading the profligate life we have heard, and engaged in such murderous designs, he could never, never think of marriage."

"In that case," said Hargrave, "it is more than ever necessary for his own exculpation, and for the honour of your family, that the charges against him should be fully and finally disproved. I am for proceeding instantly to Salt Hill."

This consideration, coupled with the recollection that it was indispensably necessary to discover and unmask his secret enemy before he could again offer himself to Chritty Norberry, overcame Middleton's scruples, and, with a heavy heart, he stepped into a post-chaise, which was ordered to drive to Salt Hill. Clements suggested, that they should take officers with them, for the purpose of securing the culprit; but this was overruled by Middleton, who, with a characteristic generosity, had pre-

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his unaccountable enmity
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room upstairs. Clements,
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the bride and bridegroom
table partaking of a me

recognised the well-known Clara Manning, alias Clara Horton, to whom each of them had once been passionately attached—to whom they had both been betrothed. The splendour of her dress could not conceal the rapid decay of her beauty—a process which seemed to have been accelerated by sickness and anxiety rather than by the ravages of time. Aghast with astonishment, the whole party preserved, for some seconds after the first burst of wonder, a profound silence; while the eyes of Caleb Ball glanced rapidly from the door to Clements, and thence to his companions, as if anxious to gather the purport of their unwelcome visit. Reddening with mingled scorn and anger, the bride at length found words to demand the meaning of such an unwarrantable intrusion; when Middleton, anxious to spare her feelings, replied that they came upon a most distressing errand, and implored her to withdraw while they interrogated her husband.

“No!” was the indignant reply; “I am his wife, and I insist upon remaining where I am.”



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myself to bring to the gallows, adduced a single proof against me beyond his own unsupported assertion, which, even had it been an oath, would not have been worth a rush?"

"None whatever; but he has mentioned circumstances—."

"I can explain them all. Let him be kept in confinement for only two days, which can be no hardship, since he is an avowed and notorious thief, and I undertake to disprove, to your entire satisfaction, every one of his infamous calumnies, which are only advanced for the sake of extorting money."

"Or, in other words," said Clements, "you want two days to effect your escape from the country. I have no objection to be confined myself; but I demand—."

At this moment a noise was heard without, and an attempt was made to open the door, which was prevented by Clements, who suddenly turned the lock, imagining that some of Ball's unprincipled associates might be coming to rescue him.

"Open the door instantly!" was uttered in

Clements, setting his o

Hargrave and Mid
another, wondering wh
authoritative demand r
bride, turning pale, c
her husband, who too
snuff without altering a

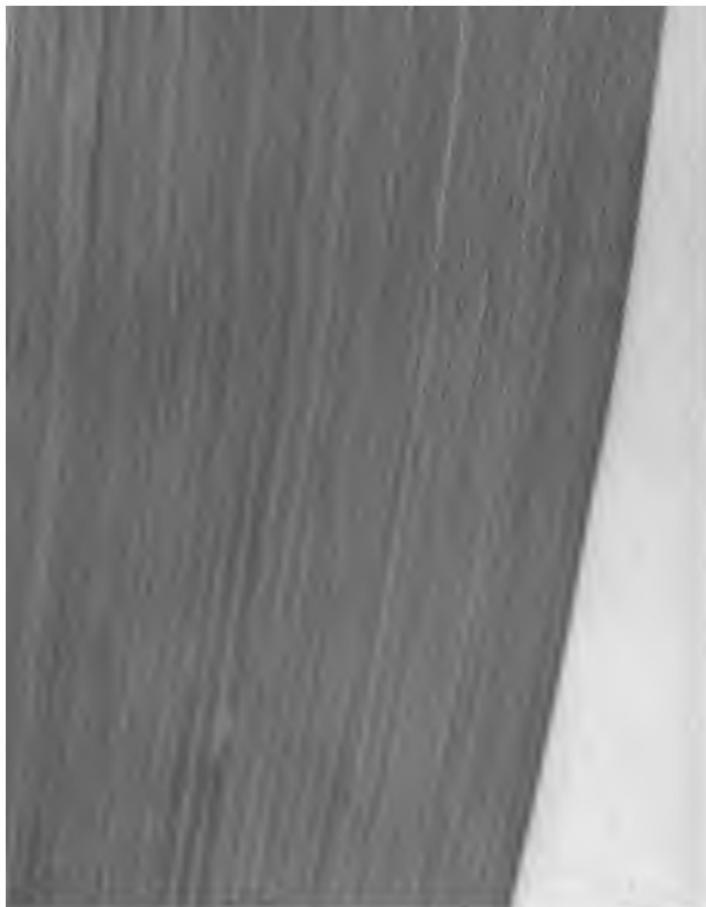
“ Nay, then,” cried
“ we act in the king’s
use force;” with which
violently broken open, c
tice, followed by three
tered the room.

“ Mr. Ball,” said o
vancing towards him,
soner: we have a wa
hension; you stand char

frauded, he continued, in a voice of calm and sullen desperation, “ Ha ! the game is all up, I see. Fool that I was to linger here ! I thought I had five or six days good. Well, well—this ends the farce ! ” So saying, he hastily snatched a phial from his waistcoat pocket, plucked out the cork, and was applying it to his lips, when his wife, with a cry of terror, struck it from his hand, and it was dashed to pieces on the floor.

For the first time her husband’s countenance underwent a change, and an expression of fell malignity distorted his features as he cried in a wrathful voice—

“ Curses upon you, wretched woman !—what have you done ? I was about to offer you the only atonement in my power, by making you a widow : I will now punish your officious prevention of my purpose by apprising you that you are the wife of Caleb Ball, who confesses himself guilty of everything with which he is charged, and who must perish ignominiously upon a scaffold, because you would not suffer him to die like a



without the smallest hope of recovering the money, since they had ascertained that the whole of it had been lost at the gaming-table.

"Is there no hope of hushing up or compromising this dreadful affair?" demanded Middleton in great perturbation.

"None," replied the banker: "we have fully made up our minds that the law shall take its course, unless, indeed, the whole amount should be refunded to us, of which we have now no expectation whatever."

"Why not? Large as is the amount, and unpardonable as has been the conduct of my unfortunate cousin, I am confident that Sir Matthew would much rather advance the whole sum than suffer his own nephew to be brought to a public and ignominious death."

"Sir Matthew! have you not then heard that his house has this morning stopped payment?"

"Gracious Heaven! what house?"

"That of Middleton, Thwaytes, and Hob-

in stocks and me
enormous losses,
countable, that I
apprized of this
immediate orders for

“ But surely there
surplus; my father's
fortune cannot all be

“ It grieves me
for whom I have a son.
So far from any sur-
derable deficiency.”

Middleton sank his
face in his hands to have
ever, trickled through
the gush of filial tende-

demanded of the banker whether he had ever been at Brookshaw. "Yes, in the time of your godfather, old James Gale," was the reply.

"Then you know the extent and value of the property. Would it produce, if sold, enough to cover your demand against Caleb Ball?"

"Certainly, more than enough."

"Then take it; it is yours! I would part with a hundred Brookshaws rather than that my dear father, at such a moment of distress, should suffer one additional pang. I know him well; he is proud of his fair fame; he is fond of Caleb; and though this feeling must now naturally cease, I verily believe that he would never show his face again, that he would die rather than go upon the Royal Exchange, if his nephew's public execution were to entail disgrace upon his whole family."

"Considering your cousin's conduct towards you," said the banker, "your proposal is magnanimous, and I accept it with gratitude; but there is no occasion to sell Brookshaw. Give me a mortgage upon it to the amount of my loss, and I will gladly drop all proceedings."

pact of secrecy. Not
action must escape,
Gentlemen, will you
condition, and will y
the silence of the offic
ployed?"

A willing consent
rangement, one of the
ney, drew up a paper,
and it was agreed that
main in the custody o
house, until the prope
be prepared and mut
further stipulated tha
allowed to interrogate
witnesses, before he w
of confinement, for w

cuffs had not been removed. His countenance had resumed its stolid, imperturbable expression, and his leaden eye remained fixed upon the floor. "Caleb!" said his cousin in a mild tone of voice, "do you really mean to confess yourself guilty of all the heavy charges brought against you by Henry Clements?"

"Yes. If I am to be hanged for forgery what is the use of denying them? Let that answer suffice for all. I will not be pestered with interrogatories. I know my fate, and am prepared to meet it: I should be still more so if I could get at my snuff-box."

Though not a little surprised at such a remark in so trying a crisis, Middleton kindly took out the box and held it to his nose, when he drew a large portion of its contents into his nostrils, and seemed gratified by this little act of attention. "But if you were *not* to be hanged for forgery," resumed Gale,—"if by mortgaging my estate at Brookshaw, and paying the amount of their loss, I prevailed upon the bankers to drop all criminal proceedings,

“and though I ha
geries were detecte
from England wit
tended, I had muc
married, you know.”
tone, while the slig
imated towards a bi

“I am happy the
life is saved,” resum
made this arrangem
have given me a w
the prosecution.”

“Have they?—he
his usually dull an
rapidly from side to
upon the floor, as if

"pend upon your giving me frank and explicit answers to all my questions."

"Will you pledge me your honour that if I do so you will never take advantage of my replies, never institute proceedings against me?"

"I promise this most solemnly."

"Speak, then; you have removed every impediment to my making a full and free confession."

"In the first place, did I ever offend you,—ever do you an injury?"

"Never!"

"Why then did you seek my life with such a remorseless perseverance?"

"Did you ever read old Gale's will? In order to deter you from leading a single life, which he always declared had been a miserable one to himself, he conditioned that, in the event of your dying unmarried, the Brookshaw estate should come to me."

"I had quite forgotten it; but—gracious heavens! is it possible, is it to be believed that for so base and sordid an object you would

"And was it to
Miss Norberry than
famous letters to be

The "ay" was in
same tone and manner

"And with a smile
employed some account
the china closet at M

"It was myself who
occasion."

"You!—you!—I
that I did not recognize

"I wore a mask.
the pistol from me, and
power, I pretended to
for succour, and I was
my escape."

" Cannot you guess it ?"

" Caleb Ball ! Caleb Ball ! I believe in my heart that you are mad, and the amazement, the indignation, the horror that I might otherwise feel, merges into compassion. You were already in comfortable circumstances ; you would shortly have been a partner in the house ; what necessity then, or rather, what devil can have driven you to the commission of such monstrous atrocities ?"

" The gaming-table, which is a whole legion of devils. My nights were devoted to it—I could not exist without it—I should have gone mad had I not possessed the means of high and desperate play. To procure these means I stuck at no enormity. I speculated—I ran in debt, I forged acceptances :—detection, disgrace, a scaffold, were constantly staring me in the face. Your death would have given me Brookshaw, and the sale of the estate would have enabled me to take up the forged acceptances before they became due, and to extricate myself from all my difficulties. Self-preservation, as I told Clements, is the first law of nature. Can you

though I am still filled
at such a terrible moment
your fate, you could have
of marriage."

"I did it in self defense
everything. My wife had
From the arrangement
lated that my forged
not be detected for a year.
row I should have set
on the following day I
ing for New York, having
passage on board an American
the Downs."

"And does your uncle
thing of this purpose?"

"Nothing; but she

shall never use her ill; I have no motive for doing so."

"Caleb! I have only one more question to ask, and I have reserved it for the last, because it is infinitely the most important, so far as concerns yourself. You are an accountable being, you possess an immortal soul, you have been educated as a Christian, you must believe in a future state of rewards and punishments—how then can you have so seared your conscience as to perpetrate such wanton and enormous crimes with so much seeming indifference? Above all, steeped as you already are in guilt, how can you have dared to rush into the presence of an offended God by attempting to commit the additional and inexpiable sin of suicide?"

"Have you forgotten that our tutor always assured me I was one of the elect—a vessel pre-destined from all time to honour and glory? This has been latterly confirmed to me by a divine of the same persuasion, with the addition, that they who have once been chosen can never forfeit their birthright, whatever sins



Heaven ! Your offences against myself I have already pardoned, but I will never see you again. We part for ever. Farewell !”

With these words he quitted the chamber, the two officers who had been stationed at the door, re-entered it, and the prisoner's first and only demand was for snuff, with which his handcuffs prevented him from supplying himself !

Middleton, ever considerate for the feelings of others, even of those who had most deeply injured him, broke to the wretched wife, as tenderly and delicately as he could, the painful predicament in which her husband was placed, suggesting, that as he must necessarily be accompanied by the officers of justice, and conveyed to a place of confinement, she would do well to seek some other mode of conveyance, and betake herself to her friends in London. Terrified, humiliated, and almost broken-hearted, the unfortunate woman expressed the deepest gratitude for his kindness, but declined taking his advice, exclaiming in an interval of



CHAPTER XI.

Whiles a wedlock hymn we sing,
Feed yourselves with questioning ;
That reason, wonder may diminish
How thus we met and these things finish.

As you like it.

He, therefore, who retards the progress of intellect, countenances crime—nay, to a state, is the greatest of criminals ; while he, who circulates that mental light, more precious than the visual, is the holiest improver, and the surest benefactor of his race !

The Disowned.

IN a few days, all the legal documents relative to the mortgage having been executed, Caleb Ball was released from his confinement, and, accompanied by his wife, proceeded to the American vessel in the Downs, on board which

from Mrs. Ball, v
the following to Cl

" MADAM,

" Before th
am conveyed awa
country where for
nothing but humil
I feel myself called
justice, equally due
nerous, the noble-n
sacrifice of fortune,
from an ignominiou
my guilty husband,
matory letters which
to his cousin, he m
curredance - C

of secrecy upon the subject, and it is because I know his high and punctilious sense of honour, that I have determined upon the painful, the revolting, disclosures which I am now about to make to you.

"How wickedly I forswore myself towards your brother-in-law, Mr. Hargrave, as well as of the swift and terrible retribution entailed upon my crime, you have doubtless heard, for that affair was too notorious to be concealed. Alas! my punishment did not end with the tragical catastrophe that then blighted my hopes. I had always been wayward, daring, and self-willed. I was an orphan, living with an uncle, my guardian. He condemned my conduct towards Mr. Hargrave so severely, that, in a moment of irritation, I quitted his house, and betook myself to that of a distant relative, a woman of eccentric habits and of doubtful reputation. Here I learned to scorn the opinion of the world; to ridicule all those who had censured me, as prudes and pretenders; to cast off the decorous observances of society, which we branded with the names of

most censorious and
the purest will gene-
towards an erring I
have never felt em-
depositary of my sh-
dam, when I confess
of evil example and
sions, I fell from
eloped from the hot
married man ! Pity
you, that, on awaki-
filled with horror, and
passionate anxiety to
to the station I had
whom I had sacrific-
that he was already
that it was not

"To this suggestion I gave my consent, although with a compunctions loathing that I should in vain endeavour to describe. Assuming the name and character of my guardian uncle, which his age and appearance did not disqualify him from supporting, my accomplice carried me immediately to a house in the vicinity of Cambridge, hoping to entrap some young and unsuspecting student of the University. Fixing for this purpose upon Mr. Middleton, he contrived to make acquaintance with him, and brought him frequently to our home, where my deep melancholy—how could I be otherwise than miserable?—assisted me in winning the affections of one who was tender and compassionate, because he was himself unhappy. Now was my heart exposed to a struggle still more lacerating than any with which it had yet been harrowed. I became deeply attached to my suitor, and the more I loved him, the more bitterly did I reproach myself with the cruel deception I was about to practise. I had, nevertheless agreed to accept him as my husband, and he was on the

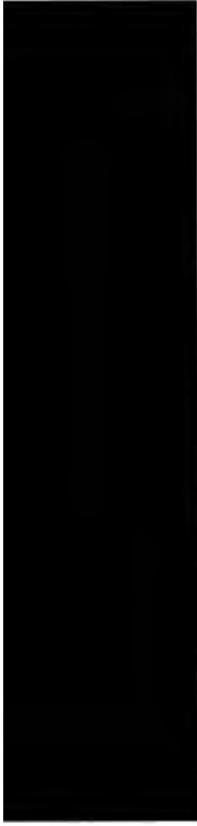


overcome, by so unexpectedly encountering the two men to whom I had been betrothed, and whose affections I had justly forfeited by my own inexcusable criminality.

" Of the indignities and wretchedness that I have endured, living with a man whom I detested, haunted with the perpetual dread of exposure and disgrace, abhorring the treacherous designs I was ever hatching, and yet incessantly renewing them, that I might in some degree recover the station I had forfeited, I will spare both you and myself the recital. Suffice it to state, that I at length became acquainted with Caleb Ball ; the motives with which I consented to marry him, for attachment was out of the question, I have already detailed ; *his* sole inducement to the match, as he hesitates not to avow, was my little fortune. That we shall both be unhappy, it is but reasonable to anticipate ; but I have the satisfaction of feeling that *my* misery will not be of long endurance. Sorrow and sickness have already undermined my constitution ; death, I trust, will ere long release me from my woes ;



sorrow, if confined to our own bosom, soon evaporate through the safety-valve of the mouth. So much and so loudly did the worthy Baronet talk of the scandalous maltreatment he had experienced, that he quickly ceased to feel it. His conduct was in every respect highly honourable. All was cheerfully given up to the creditors; he returned with his family to the house in Laurence-Pountney-lane; and, resolving never again to expose himself to the risk of a partnership, set vigorously to work in recovering some portion of what he had lost. That benevolent dispensation of Providence which so often conceals blessings amid the misfortunes with which we are visited, and justifies the scriptural averment, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," was forcibly exemplified in the Middleton family. Ned Travers, whom the reader may recollect as "the first broker on the Russia walk," not only lent Sir Matthew five thousand pounds to assist him in recommencing business, but renewed his offer to Cecilia, who, having always stood well-affected towards her civic



this opportunity of twitting, as he communicated “ Ned’s no jack-a-dandy glisters—can’t make a silhouette: don’t ask’ee, Meg, what cut of his coat, but what duct? *That’s* what I call man, hey? what, hick !”

Cecilia, happy in the nasal shortly afterwards took Broad-street Buildings, where whose spirits the city air like the laughing or para dropped in, to partake of dings for which Ned’s celebrity.

Lady Middleton. a wi

her old city acquaintance with which she could not fail to be highly gratified, though the recollection of her past follies was not always unattended with humiliating sensations. One of the most pleasing results of her altered circumstances was a perfect reconciliation with Mrs. Howard Maltby, who prevailed upon her husband to complete the sum required by Sir Matthew as a capital for his new business, and who evinced a delicate and generous feeling towards her sister, which the latter, now that she was no longer embittered by attempts at rivalry, appreciated as she ought. For shining in her present station Lady Middleton was eminently qualified, and she found it much more pleasant to take the lead where her claims were willingly admitted, than to dangle at the heels of fashion, at the constant risk of being spurned away with a contemptuous kick.

Gale Middleton, who was ever ready to sacrifice the dearest wishes of his own heart to the comfort and the interests of others, remained in London to be present at the marriage of his sister, as well as to offer the con-

on for Maple Hatch, his
which had in some degree
an active correspondence.
Here he was received with
expression of cordial and
that recompensed him in
their separation; nor was
her ardent admiration of
conduct towards his country
and preserve the honour of
the time," said Middleton.
thought to the diminution
as the possession of mon-
happiness, I would not suf-
fice me a moment's anxiety;
ly it has weighed upon my

thwarted the fondest wishes of my heart. My secret, my only enemy, is detected and expatriated; you yourself have dispelled the superstition that darkened and saddened my mind, and other minor impediments are removed; one difficulty, however, still remains, and it is not of a nature to be easily overcome. Two-thirds of the rental of Brookshaw will be absorbed in paying the interest of the mortgage, and though Sir Matthew insists on being ultimately answerable for the whole amount, and is sanguine that in a very few years he shall be enabled to clear me from all my incumbrances, I can at present only sue you in *formā pauperis*, and am almost afraid, by renewing the offer of my hand, to ask you to share my humble lot, when I am sensible that your unrivalled merits entitle you——”

“ Nay,” interposed Chritty, blushing, and speaking in a tone of gentle reproach, “ this is equally unworthy of you and of me. For shame, Middleton! Say no more, I beseech you, though I know the generous motive by which you are actuated. Deem me frank



"Upon that subject you cannot feel more indifferent than I do. To the proud and the luxurious, who foolishly exclude themselves from wedlock, unless they can live in gay cities and support an expensive establishment, we will willingly leave the enjoyment of their selfish celibacy; we, fortunately, are dwellers in the country, and it will be for Hargrave and our dear Lucy, for you and for myself, to prove how humble a competency will command the comforts and even the elegancies of life, as well as how large a share of happiness may be brought within the reach of narrow means."

Of the wedding, which was celebrated shortly afterwards in the most simple and unostentatious manner, we have little to record. Hargrave performed the sacred ceremony: Sir Matthew and Lady Middleton were present, as well as Cecilia and her husband, the latter of whom, blushing and apologizing for the liberty he was taking, made very handsome presents to the bride, and to her friends, the Misses Talford, who acted as bridesmaids. Mr. Norberry actually smiled during the whole time

astonished clerk, then to a
party, and finally, to the
companying curtsies and
ordinary depth and suau-
dinner, which was give
House, did credit to the
who, having been weepi
morning, made ample ato
during the remainder of
liant and unabated vivac
heart as gladsome as her o

In conformity with a p
Maple Hatch was given
removed to the Lodge,
was propitiated by a da
Jemmy Gale's "London

trimming his grotesque favourites, the huge evergreen peacocks.

How to dispose of Clements had been a subject of some difficulty. No one would employ a man of such abandoned character, and yet to turn him loose and penniless upon the world would almost necessitate a recurrence to his former evil courses. "This unfortunate man," said Middleton, "is of violent temper: he has a morbid feeling of disaffection towards what he calls the injustice of the world. Circumstances and evil example have been his ruin; but his powerful affection for his child as well as his sister, and his anxiety to give the former a virtuous education, convince me that there is good in his nature, that he is reclaimable to society; and I am determined to try the experiment by finding him employment upon one of my farms."

In this benevolent resolution he persevered, although it was loudly condemned by some of his acquaintance. Nothing could exceed the gratitude and delight of Clements when it was communicated to him. "Oh! sir," he ex-

flowers that I loved will
be my darling Harry do
not feel that I am living
that my dear son will be
of guilt, and I shall be in

He was allowed to re-
feelings for the moment
time, although they were
he reflected upon his pa-
tions and as consequence
became more indolent.
his boundless gratitude
after furnished Middle
remarking, that there was
way of destroying you
if making them your
thoroughly reformed ch-

after ploughing him into a reverberation of spirits from which he cannot be aroused.

The unfortunate wife of David Bell was right in her matrimonial misgivings. She clung to the boy after her arrival at New York; her husband who thus became possessed of her property, being still unacquainted with his addition to realty, presently lost the whole of it at the gaming-table, and was left by the last resources in a state of utter destitution.

One of the few remunerations practised at Brookshaw was the managing of the laboratory, the maintenance of which had been attended with considerable expense. Middleton abandoned his chemical pursuits without regret, the reasons that had first turned his thoughts to physical philosophy being no longer operative, now that he imagined a much larger and more useful sphere to be opened to him in the moral world. His originally sanguine and cheerful temperament being now rapidly developed, he would have become almost overweening in his confidence of accele-

ment of his wife, who
more anxious to regul
his enthusiasm. Some
ingly asked him what
unsided and alone, wit
means, and without
power. "What can I
to such objectors, with
himself and in his spec
do? We have found
wanted: the press sup
for the lever, or rather i
even so humble an ind
hope to raise the mora
then, distrust his abilit
creatures: the will ak

fulminate decrees against the rights and liberties of nations may be compelled to bow down their crowned heads to a solitary magician, sitting in his closet, and wielding no other weapon than that omnipotent sword of reason—a pen."

Excited by these lofty convictions, and animated by a philanthropic ardour, Middleton determined not to limit the sphere of his utility to the immediate vicinity of Brookshaw, but to dedicate a portion of every year to a tour through the different counties of England, on the first of which excursions, accompanied by the best of all possible assistants, his wife, he was employed, when the manuscript of this work was sent to the press, both of them gathering into the garner of their own bosoms an abundant harvest from the happiness they were disseminating. To contribute to the improvement of the poorer classes by establishing schools, Temperance, and Friendly Societies, and similar institutions is Middleton's main object; but his views are not limited to one class or to a single purpose. "England, reformed England," he exclaimed to a friend,

as he took leave of him, "is now in the crisis of a political regeneration, which, if I mistake not, will enable her to emerge from her throes and difficulties, like a giant refreshed with wine, and to re-assert her proud prerogative of teaching the nations how to live. For the attainment of this glorious end all her sons without distinction, should unite in a solemn league and covenant, the Reformers to realize their sanguine anticipations, the Anti-reformers to prevent, as far as possible, the evils they have prognosticated. In our views we may have differed, but let

vidual felt the patriotic inspiration which led the poet Wordsworth to exclaim,—

In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible knights of old :
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakspeare spake ;—the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held :—in every thing we are sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold."

For his occasional eccentricities of thought and action, for his continuing to wear at his heart the miniature of the Saviour, in the belief that it might influence him to a better observance of the Christian duties; for having sacrificed a large portion of his fortune to preserve his direst enemy from shame; and for receiving into his service an acknowledged thief, who had once attempted his life, the hero of the preceding pages continues to receive from some the title of *crazy* Middleton. Whether or not he deserves the epithet prefixed to his name, we leave to the decision of the reader.

THE END.

the same time, the public's interest in the environment has increased, and the public's concern about environmental problems has increased. This has led to a demand for more information about the environment, and a desire to learn more about how to protect it. This has led to a demand for more information about the environment, and a desire to learn more about how to protect it.

The following sections will provide an overview of the environmental issues facing the world today, and will discuss some of the ways in which we can work together to address them.



